

**Safe Schools for Teaching and Learning:
Developing a School-wide, Self-study Process**

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(ABSTRACT)

This study examined public primary school teachers' perceptions of the factors contributing to safe school learning environments. Teachers' perceptions and behaviors were examined to assist task force members to develop and conduct a self-study process for enhancing a safe learning environment for pupils.

Twenty-eight primary school teachers from one public primary school in Malawi participated in the study. Data on teachers' perceptions and behaviors were collected through a survey. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the survey data on teachers' perceptions. The data from the self-study process generated the discussions in the task force meetings where teachers shared their perceptions of classroom practices that contributed to a safe learning environment.

The task force conducted a four-step self-study process. The steps of the process were building awareness and community, developing a group focus, implementing the ideas of the group focus, and reflecting on the practice. The participating teachers' experiences suggested that the process discouraged teachers from direct instruction and encouraged them to actively engage students more in their learning. As a result the teachers experienced fewer discipline problems in their classes.

The perceptions of teachers in the survey indicated that the school environment was generally positive for teaching and learning. However, there were some elements that could adversely affect school safety. For example, there were problems in maintaining some of the school facilities such as books and children's latrines. The finding of the self-study process indicated that the school could develop elements of school safety. For example, the teachers in the study developed positive attitudes toward their teaching and learning. They reported for school activities on time and involved learners in their learning.

The study had a number of implications for teaching and learning and teacher educators. The self-study process, for example, was able to change teachers' attitudes about their learners, thereby enhancing the learner-teacher classroom relationship. Suggestions for further research are also given. For example, further studies could focus on the replication of the study in other schools in order to examine the self-study process in different school contexts. And such replication could assist further understanding and refinement of the self-study process for addressing school safety as well as other identified school problems.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my wife and children who encouraged and supported me during the entire period I was at school and also when I was working on my dissertation. I sincerely cherish their encouragement and support.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In many countries of the world, including Malawi, there is a great regard for the role of school safety in creating environments conducive to learning. Such learning environments provide for children's needs so that they can perform to the best of their ability (Wortman and Loftus, 1988). On the contrary, an unsafe environment poses great threat and anxiety in both teachers and pupils and causes lots of damage to schools and education systems (Bushweller, 2001; Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, Abbott, and Catalano, 2000; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1995; Orpinas and Frankowski, 2001; Raviv, Raviv, Shimoni, and Leavitt, 1999; Warner, Weist and Krulak, 1999). In Malawi, primary schools face different problems every day. Many pupils lack basic needs such as food and clothing and encounter abuse in the school as well as in the home. There are instances when teachers are responsible for harassing, threatening, raping, and impregnating pupils. These pupils do not do well in school and consequently drop out of school (Malawi Institute of Education, 1997). There are also instances when teachers are threatened in and around the school, schools are looted, teaching and learning materials are no longer left in the classrooms, and teachers are disrupted in their teaching practice (Bushweller, 2001). Despite these consequences, little is known about the nature of these problems in Malawian schools. Instead, the schools have attributed these problems to disciplinary issues and, therefore, have used disciplinary actions to address them. Parents and religious organizations have attributed school problems to loss of cultural values, moral decay, multiparty democracy, and negligence of duty on the part of teachers (Fixler, 2000; Malawi Institute of Education, 1997).

Alexander M. Smith in his novel Tears of the Giraffe (2000) narrates some examples of loss of morals on the part of children today as compared to the past when teaching of morals was the responsibility of every elder. The character in this story, Mma Ramotswe, worries about Batswana youth when she reflects:

Nowadays, of course, there were plenty of people who appeared to be turning away from that morality. She saw it in the behavior of school children, who strutted about and pushed their way around with scant respect for older people. When she was at

school, children respected adults and lowered their eyes when they spoke to them, but now children looked straight at you and answered back. She had recently told a young boy – barely thirteen, she thought – to pick up an empty can that he had tossed on the ground in the mall the other day. He had looked at her in amazement, and had then laughed and told her that she could pick it up if she liked, as he had no intention of doing so. She had been so astonished by his cheek that she had been unable to think of a suitable riposte, and he had sauntered away, leaving her speechless. When she was young, a woman would have picked up a boy like that and spanked him on the spot. But today you couldn't spank other people's children in the street; if you tried to do so there would be an enormous fuss. She was a modern lady, of course, and did not approve of spanking, but sometimes one had to wonder. Would that boy have dropped the can in the first place if he knew that somebody might spank him? Probably not. (p. 19)

Though fictional, Mma Ramotswe echoes and represents a sector of Malawi that sees the decay of morals in the country especially in urban and suburban areas. These areas have a diverse culture; people are exposed to modern technology and cultural values seem to be neglected. There, things have changed, no one, not even teachers in the schools have the courage to counsel a pupil (Smith, 2000). However, in rural areas things are different; the teaching of morals is still taking place through practices such as initiations. In Malawi there are different ethnic groups and the teaching of morals varies according to the traditions of the various ethnic groups.

In a Chewa tradition, children, boys and girls, at the age of twelve or above, who have reached puberty, are ushered into adulthood through initiation rites. Chewa is one of the ethnic groups in Malawi popularly known by its traditional dance, '*gulewamkulu*'. Gulewamkulu are masqueraders and its literal translated is 'big dance'. Most Chewa initiations are done in secret for confidentiality because it is prohibited for the uninitiated to see what goes on during initiation. For days preceding the initiation period, parents and relatives of the initiates give reports of the behavior of their children to initiators to determine how severely they should be treated. During the ritual, obedience is emphasized; initiates are reminded of the past misdemeanors according to the reports, and therefore treated accordingly (Short, 1974).

After the ritual, Short says, the initiated would still live in secret for sometime to receive knowledge and wisdom from an older initiate, the ritual having “consisted of a code for right living embodying the precepts of Chewa morality” (p. 10). Initiation marks the last stage in a young person’s traditional education. This informal training helps to socialize youths so that they are able to solve problems that arise together with others. That done, the youth is regarded as an adult and is expected to act thusly; failure to do so could result in re-initiation, something that any youth would not like to redo. When the initiated go back to school -- for most of them go for initiation while in school or during vacations -- many tend to behave as instructed during initiation and any acts of misbehavior may become minimized. On the other hand, because of the way some initiates are treated during the initiation, they tend to misbehave and begin to harass teachers and other pupils at school.

School problems may also be attributed to the fairly recent political changes in Malawi. Malawi attained her first multiparty democracy after the general elections in 1964 but then became a one party state in 1971. In the referendum of 1993, the people of Malawi voted for a multiparty system of government, which they attained in 1994. The recent changes to multiparty democracy have provided people, youth inclusive, with rights and freedoms, which they never had in the one party system of government. These rights and freedoms are enshrined in Chapter IV of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi. “Democracy means free exercise of one’s rights” (Teacher Development Unit, Handbook 3, 1998, p. 996). It does not mean, however, freedom to do anything. Rights and freedoms go together with responsibilities such as respect for other people’s rights (McQuoid-Mason, O’Brien and Green, 1991; Teacher Development Unit, Handbook 3, 1998; Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation, 1995). In Malawi many have misunderstood democracy. All too often the rights and freedoms have been interpreted as freedom to break the law. Furthermore, the youth of Malawi have developed risky behaviors such as drug use and abuse because they feel they have the right and the freedom to do so.

Negligence of duty or lack of training on the part of teachers is yet another contributing factor to school problems. Malawi opted for Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994, which resulted in recruiting untrained teachers without ethics of the teaching profession (Chikwapulo, 2004; Kunje and Chimombo, 1999). “The introduction of FPE in 1994 raised primary school enrolment by about 70% from 1.9 million in 1993/94 school year to 3.2

million in 1994/95” (Teacher Development Unit, MIITEP Course Handbook, undated, p. 4). At the time, Malawi had 16,567 qualified teachers, which would put the teacher/student ratio to 1:88. To lower the teacher/student ratio, the Ministry of Education recruited 18,000 untrained teachers, who accounted for 42% of the teaching force. This created another problem as to how teachers in schools were going to cope with the influx of new pupils and ill-equipped, untrained teachers. The Ministry of Education designed a new program, MIITEP, in order to train the untrained teachers in the quickest way possible. The program allowed student teachers to be in teacher training colleges for 16 weeks, 13 weeks at the beginning of the course and 3 weeks at the end to prepare for their final examinations. The program also allowed the student teachers to teach in their schools while doing other course work for 55 weeks (Teacher Development Unit, MIITEP Course Handbook, undated). The student teachers, therefore, learned more of the teaching profession from the experienced teachers in the schools. But there is laxity from the majority of experienced teachers in the schools who are tired of the government’s false promises for better conditions (Khonde, 2004).

Negligence of duty on the part of experienced teachers is attributed to many factors including the government’s failure to provide favorable conditions. Negligence has resulted in reducing teachers’ efforts in their teaching. Some teachers absent themselves from school to carry on their businesses; others are absent because they were drunk the previous day while others are absent because they do not care. And some teachers have developed negative behaviors towards their pupils. This lack of commitment to duty has made the relationship between teachers and pupils tense, and pupils look at the schools as unsafe environments for their learning.

Rationale for the Study

In Malawi, literature that documents efforts to create safe learning environments in public primary schools was hard to find though there were school rules on the ground. The school rules enabled the schools to discipline teachers and pupils. While school rules might have reduced the need for defensiveness and fear, the patterns of behavior and learning are that children learn by examples, consciously or unconsciously (South African Department of

Education, 2001). What teachers do to pupils and what pupils do to other pupils is much more important than what they say. The attitude of teachers and pupils for example affects teaching and academic performance of learners. For example one Venda speaking person recounts, “My English teacher was an Indian. She was very cruel...if she told you to read a paragraph and you pronounced a word wrongly, she would say, “My child, why are you bothering yourself by coming here everyday?” (South African Department of Education, 2001, p. 10). Chimangire (2003) explains, “... a standard eight teacher, at one of the primary schools in Malawi, told girls in his class that he would assist them to cheat in the examinations in order to pass if he sexually abused them. Out of desperation, some of the girls gave in one by one” (p. 4). Bushweller, (2001) recalls Laura Mark’s incident where a student wanted her to change a failing grade. Marks refused; the teenager exploded, “You bitch, you ruined my life!” (p. 25). And she started beating her up. Such behaviors bring harm, embarrassment, guilt, and betrayal to the teachers and pupils. As a result, teachers might leave the job or pupils might drop out of school.

Although rules are available in schools, teachers still practice negative behaviors in their classrooms. Perhaps self-regulation would work better than the fear of the rules, disciplinary action, which does not work in many cases. In other words, teachers should be role models and should lead the way in developing safe classrooms. A safe learning environment should focus on teaching and learning and on building a culture of safety in which teachers and learners all feel acknowledged and respected (Department of Education, 2001). The culture of safety facilitates the development of negotiation, respect, and tolerance even in difficult situations. When a culture of safety is in place, the South African Department of Education (2001) says,

Educators feel sufficiently valued to be prepared to take on new challenges, experiment with teaching techniques, or provide extra support to learners. Learners are aware of the goals to which they aspire and feel supported towards these goals. A culture of safety and pride encourages learners and educators to take risks and to believe that their initiative will be appreciated, their mistakes forgiven. (p. 21).

Self-study Process

According to the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2002), a safe environment is a vibrant community that encourages open dialogue, constructive expressions of unique perception and experiences in which all learners reach their full unique potential. A strategy that may be followed to achieve the vibrant community is the self-study process. Where the self-study process is used, the school community has experienced school culture that has a sense of responsibility among its members. The teachers, pupils, and parents of the school feel safe in their school, and they all develop a sense of caring nature of the school. With this process the school also experiences change in the teachers' teaching strategies. They stop using strategies that allow them to stand in front of pupils telling them the content to teaching strategies that engage pupils in the learning. With the self-study process teachers examine themselves in order to improve on those things they have not done well. The self-study process is rewarding to teachers as well as to pupils because teachers think more about their pupils and their teaching (Rothenberg, McDermott and Martin, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

A safe environment for teaching and learning is the expectation of most parents, students and educators. A safe teaching and learning environment for teachers, students and school administrators is an important component of a school operation. Unsafe teaching and learning environment creates negative effects on teachers' morale, students' academic achievement and the running of the school. One goal for most schools is to create an environment that is conducive to learning, an environment that is safe for both teachers and pupils. In order to achieve the goal, schools have put in place policies pertaining to school conduct (Harris, 2001; Ministry of Education and Culture, 1982). These policies describe the expectations for behavior and the consequences imposed when the policies are violated. In Malawi, there are Handbooks on Primary School Administration (1982) and for Inspectors (1982) that contain some of these policies. These books and other government documents give a mandate to schools to suspend or expel a pupil for bad behavior and to reprimand a teacher because of unbecoming behavior.

The problem this study was concerned with was that the school policies pertaining to teachers' and pupils' conduct did not automatically create a safe learning environment. Actually the policies addressed behavioral or security problems, which were the tip of the problem and failed to meet the needs of the child. What the teachers and pupils needed was the realization that real learning takes place in a safe environment. A safe learning environment is one that provides the child with his or her needs or the desire to fulfill his or her capabilities (Hendrikz, 1986). It is worth noting that, when children's desires to fulfill their capabilities are blocked, they become anxious, fearful, and defensive and they feel manipulated rather than freed, which ultimately leads to behavioral problems (Worthman and Loftus, 1985). Teachers' and pupils' attitudes toward all levels of potential and achievement are important especially for pupil learning (Hendrikz, 1986).

Purpose of the Study

The study was both descriptive and qualitative meant to find out the perceptions of teachers about the school and their classroom behaviors in one public primary school in Malawi. The study used a survey and a task force. The opinions and experiences sought from the survey and the task force findings were used to develop a school-wide self-study process. Through the survey the study investigated answers to the following questions:

1. Does a selected public primary school maintain school buildings, grounds, equipment and records to sustain teaching and learning?
2. What were the teachers' perceptions about behaviors of both teachers and pupils in this public primary school that required disciplinary action?
3. What were the perceptions of teachers about safety in this school?

Through the task force meetings the study investigated answers to the following question: "What can we do to achieve a safe environment for pupil learning?"

It was the purpose of this study to develop a self-study process for enhancing a safe learning environment in one public primary school in Malawi. The following research questions provided direction for the study:

1. What were teachers' perceptions of environment in one primary school in Malawi, specifically maintenance, discipline and safety?

2. What happened when teachers used a self-study process to improve safety in one primary school in Malawi?

Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations to the results of the study. The study was limited to teachers and pupils in one primary school in Malawi, committed to building a safe learning environment, and, therefore the results could not be generalized to teachers and pupils in other schools. Also, the study was limited to encouraging participating teachers in doing things that made pupils feel safe and discouraging them from doing things that made pupils feel unsafe in the classroom; therefore the results were not meant to represent the whole school. Another limitation was that the study was carried out in an urban public primary school, conducted in the central region and, therefore, cannot be generalized to school in larger cities, rural or private schools, or schools from the northern and southern regions. Furthermore, the information gained from the teachers' survey might not reflect conditions on the ground because teachers may have feared exposing themselves to criticisms or reprisals.

Organization of the Study

The purpose of the study was to develop a school-wide self-study process for enhancing a safe environment for pupil learning in one of the public primary school in Malawi. The organization of the study is such that Chapter 1 sets the context, rationale, and statement of the problem, the purpose, research questions and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 reviews literature on the factors that contribute to safe and unsafe school environment, impact of negative behaviors to school safety and how safe schools could be created. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the study. It has permission to research, data sources and collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the survey, the process the task force followed in enhancing a safe learning environment in their classrooms and a reflection of the process developed. And Chapter 5 gives an overview of the study, a summary of research questions 1 and 2, the self-study process, a conclusion and implications and recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Malawi, students, parents and teachers, especially those in the urban areas, spend some time trying to find a public primary school in which they would make progress and be happy (Mortimore, Davies, Varlaam, West, Devine, and Mazza, 1983). At the same time school administrators, school governing bodies, primary education advisors (PEA), people and organizations who help and support the development of public primary schools are doing their best to try to make the schools safe for pupils' learning. A safe school is an often discussed factor in many circles; fences are built around schools and measures are taken for pupil protection. But the concept is probably not well understood and fails to be addressed, for pupils continue to face many obstacles in their learning (Development and Training Services Consortium, 2003). This chapter reviews literature on contributing factors to safe and unsafe schools, and how safe schools are achieved.

Safe School Definition

Some schools in Malawi are unsafe for teaching and pupil learning. Unsafe schools are those that create fear among its teachers and pupils, thereby interfering with the learning process. An unsafe learning environment is among the reasons that make children discontinue their schooling or that make parents refuse to enroll and keep their children in school (Development and Training Services Consortium, 2003). An unsafe learning environment reduces teacher effectiveness and pupil participation and increases pupil anxiety and loss of valuable school property.

In Malawi there are also schools that are safe for teaching and learning. These schools try to provide teachers and pupils with their needs. A safe learning environment is among the reasons that make children continue schooling and is a determinant of pupil participation in their studies (Development and Training Services Consortium, 2003). Pupil participation is an important element in school safety. Literature has shown that when power relations between pupils and teachers are based on respect for dignity and rights of all, a safe learning

environment is partly achieved (Development and Training Services Consortium, 2003). The Development and Training Services Consortium defined a safe school as, “not only girl friendly but also allows boys to discard negative gender roles to practice healthier, gender-equitable behaviors with their classmates in supportive and reinforcing environment” (p. i). A safe school is not only gender sensitive it also provides its occupants with a very low physical, emotional, and psychological injury (Independent Project Trust, 1999). This study has defined a safe school, as one that provides needs of children so that they have the desire to doing the best of what they are capable of (Hendrikz, 1986; Maslow, 1973; Wortman and Loftus, 1988). This definition was also based on Maslow’s hierarchy of human basic needs (Figure 1).

Factors Contributing to a Safe School

There are a number of factors that make a child feel safe in school. One of the most important factors is the fulfillment of the basic needs of the child (Hendrikz, 1986; Maslow, 1973; Wortman and Loftus, 1985; Wortman and Loftus, 1988). Maslow (1973) said that humans have a number of in-born basic needs and that these should be satisfied first, in order to establish healthy and effective personalities. He said, “Healthy children enjoy growing and moving forward, gaining new skills, capacities and powers” (Maslow, 1968, p. 23). Using Maslow’s hierarchy of human basic needs does not necessarily mean everyone accepts Maslow’s theory in its entirety, but it provides a useful reminder to school organizers and classroom teachers to ensure that children needs are fulfilled so that they can perform to the best of their ability (Hendrikz, 1986). Going by Hendrikz’s argument, Maslow’s hierarchy of human basic needs have been discussed in this study to assist public primary school teachers in Malawi to make informed decisions to make their schools safe for pupil learning.

Maslow identified three groups of human basic needs: fundamental, psychological and self-actualization needs (Figure 1). The fundamental needs are associated with safety and satisfaction of the body; the psychological needs are associated with affiliation and self-esteem, while self-actualization needs are associated with the fulfillment of one’s unique potential. If public primary schools in Malawi provided these basic needs, the Malawian child would progress not only in class but also in developing the nation. Miller and Atkinson (2001) asserted, “The optimal goal of schooling is that students develop an in-depth understanding of

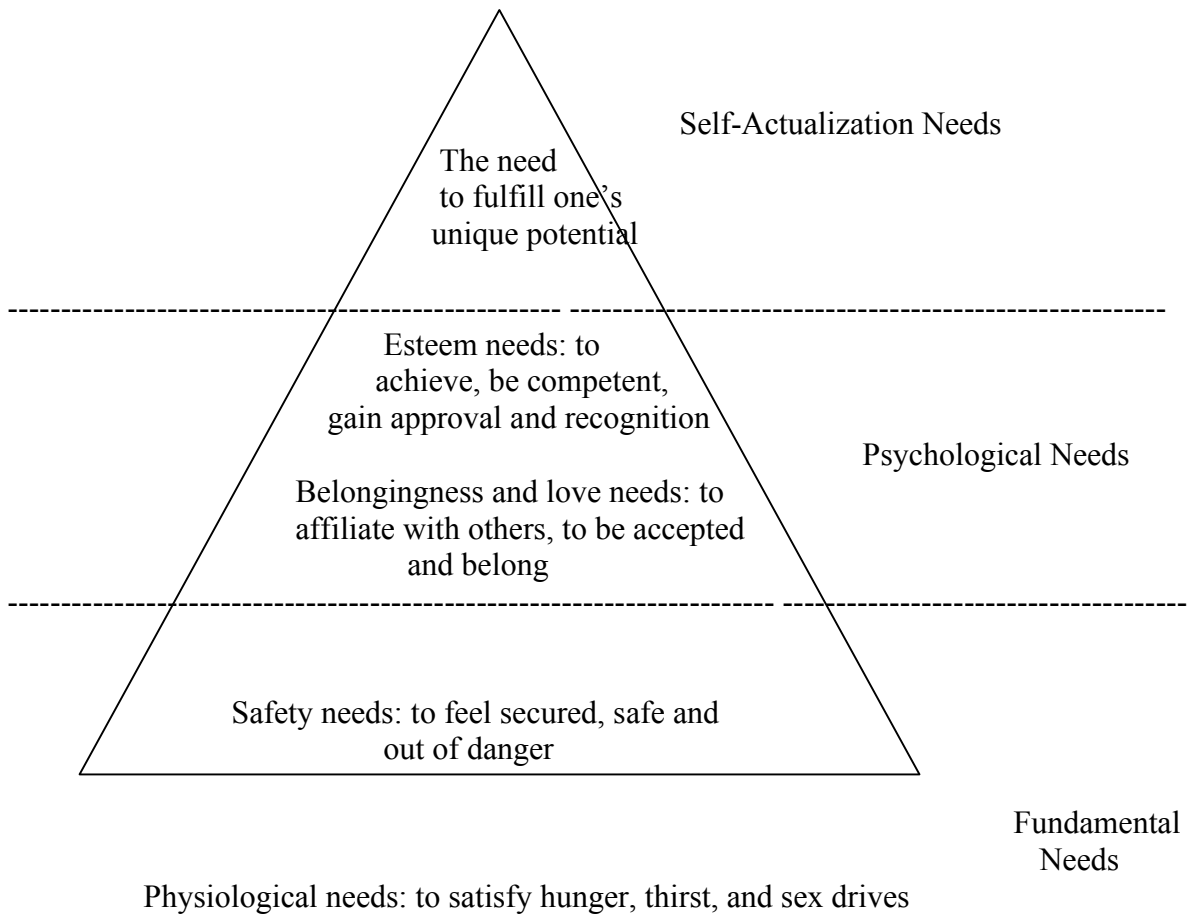


Figure 1:
Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Basic Needs

Source: Maslow, A. H. (1973). *Dominance, self-esteem, self-actualization: Germinal papers*. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

various content domains, as well as, the motivation to continue learning in the world beyond the classroom” (p. 323). Basically parents in Malawi have high expectations for their children’s success. The children themselves also have high expectations for their own success. The public primary schools’ ability to address these expectations depends entirely on the adequacy of the services they offer relative to the children’s needs (Miller and Atkinson, 2001). Factors contributing to safe school include the three basic needs – fundamental, psychological and self-actualization needs and also self-efficacy.

Fundamental Needs

Children, like any adult, have a desire to live in an environment that is stable and safe. In the school, children feel secure when they are able to assess their situations, when they know what to do, what they should not do, what is expected of them, and how others react to their behaviors (Dean, 1983). Fundamental needs are physiological and safety needs (Figure 1).

Physiological and safety needs. Physiological and safety needs reflect bodily requirements and physical and psychological security (Hendrikz, 1986; Maslow, 1973; Weiten, 1989; Wortman & Loftus, 1985; Wortman and Loftus, 1988). In school, children need certain things to satisfy their bodily needs for them to do well in class. There are situations in public primary schools in Malawi where younger children often have to walk long distances to school. In some circumstances most of these children go to school on empty bellies or having eaten very little food. We teach such children and expect them to do well in their learning. Maslow (1973) strongly argued, “For the one who is extremely and dangerously hungry no any other interests exist but food” (p. 156). In other circumstances, schools are poorly constructed, have temporary roofing, and during the rain season they leak. Sometimes the structures are too small for too many kids with little ventilation. While in other situations children get to school tired having done their domestic responsibilities. Literature shows that there is a close link between physical tiredness and hunger and the ability to concentrate (Hendrikz, 1986). Public primary schools in Malawi need to treat some of the children’s physical needs as an emergency if learning is to take place. Maslow (1973) warned that any one attempting to make an emergency picture into a typical one should not measure

all of man's goals and desires by his behavior during extreme physiological deprivation. Malawi can measure the performance of its pupils but not when they have extreme physical deprivation.

As adults seek to live in an orderly, stable and safe world protected from dangers, children need an organized world rather than an disorganized one and freedom from fear and excessive anxiety (Maslow, 1973; Weiten, 1989). In public primary schools in Malawi fear and anxiety has sometimes existed among children who have experienced harsh treatment or bullying. It has been typical for teachers in Malawi to beat and make casual comments about pupils. Maslow (1973) said, "Outbursts of rage, threatening punishments directed to the child, calling him names, speaking to him harshly, shaking him, handling him roughly or actual physical punishment some times elicit such total panic and terror in the child" (p. 159). An example of an impact of such behavior was reported in a survey by the author of a substantial number of trainee teachers. The survey showed that a high proportion of trainee teachers could remember very clearly being fearful of at least one teacher whom they met during their own schooling (Hendrikz, 1986). Hendrikz believed that the fears of the trainee teachers could be exaggerated or ill founded, but they still led to a dislike of the teacher.

Psychological Needs

People are social beings; they seek to have meaningful contact with others and react very badly to prolonged periods of social isolation (Feldman, 1985; Weiten, 1989). Other people play an important role; apart from providing comfort and reassurance for self-judgment, they also provide information about what to expect to fulfill one's needs. Psychological needs reflect affiliation and esteem needs (Figure 1).

Affiliation and self-esteem needs. The need for love, belonging and self-judgment is important in the school as is in the home. Children will seek to have affectionate relations with others and will strive to achieve their goal. When they fail, they are depressed and there is little they can achieve (Maslow, 1973 and Hendrikz, 1986). Hendrikz said that, "a teacher must be particularly watchful of the lonely and isolated pupil, who may give no trouble in the classroom and thus appear not to need special consideration or help" (1986, p. 126). He stated that such a pupil might have had a distressful experience. Research has shown that some people prefer to be alone in situations that provoke strong negative emotions (Sheatsley and

Feldman, 1964). These people feel that their unhappiness would increase and they would be embarrassed with the presence of other people. In one study Larson, Csikszentmihalyi and Graef found that loneliness affects adolescents more than adults. Adolescents related being alone with passiveness, in a more negative way and seem to experience it at considerably higher levels (1982).

Normally people tend to evaluate themselves; they make judgments of and identify themselves as good, bad, acceptable or unacceptable (Hendrikz, 1986; Maslow, 1973; Wortman and Loftus, 1985; Wortman and Loftus, 1988). In school this evaluation is strongly related to children's own achievements (Wiggins, Wiggins, and Zanden, 1994). A study of 4,000 adolescents revealed that school grades, group leadership, and close friends had greater impact on adolescents' self-esteem (Wiltfang and Scarbecz, 1990). If teachers in the public primary schools in Malawi provided what the study revealed, they might assist their children to have high self-esteem. High self-esteem involves high self-confidence, self-assurance, self-evaluation of self, feelings and general capabilities, and is associated with lack of shyness, timidity, fearfulness and embarrassment (Maslow, 1973). Literature has shown that there is a relationship between high self-esteem and a child's high achievement in school (Weiten, 1986). Low self-esteem is associated with inferiority, shyness, timidity, fearfulness and self-consciousness. Children with low self-esteem are easily embarrassed, generally silent and tend to be incapable of normal, easy and friendly relationships (Maslow, 1973; Weiten, 1986). Literature also has revealed that there is a relationship between low self-esteem and poor achievement in a variety of situations (Weiten, 1986).

Self-actualization Needs

People generally have potentials; some easily develop them while others find it difficult to do so. Those who develop them are those who realize that they have those potentials and they excel in life (Maslow, 1973; Wortman and Loftus, 1985; Wortman & Loftus, 1988). The need for excelling in one's life goals is important not only to adults but to children too. Development of potentials does not require competition with others; instead the self-actualized persons find peace and contentment in the best they can be (Maslow, 1973). Learning in public primary schools in Malawi encourages competition. The grading system demands the ranking of pupils. A child wants to take position 1 or certainly not be last in

class. Instead of pupils finding peace and contentment with the best of themselves, they begin to compete in all learning activities for first position (Wortman and Loftus, 1985). Hendrikz, (1986) defined self-actualization as

a growth need rather than a deficiency need, it includes ways an individual can develop his or her potential and suggests that there must be a well-graded and planned opportunity for him or her to acquire the needed knowledge and skills to develop his or her intellectual abilities. (p. 124)

Teachers in public primary schools in Malawi need to assist children to realize their potentials so as to excel in their education.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, though not part of Maslow's hierarchy of human basic needs, is worth noting in this work as a contributing factor to safe school. To be a self-actualized person, one must be in control and must have a feeling of mastery over the situation (Bandura, 1982; Wiggins et al., 1994). When we say we are competent, in control, or capable of dealing with a situation effectively, we mean we have attained a sense of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is important in developing a person's behavior. It regulates one's behavior whether or not to behave in a certain manner. "Even when faced with a threat or experience of failure, they are confident that they can ultimately do okay" (Wiggins et al., 1994, p. 212). In school as the children get involved in the learning activities themselves, they acquire confidence and try to go a step further and they do that frequently. The repeated successes reinforce expectations of future success, thereby encouraging them to persevere (Wortman and Loftus, 1985). In public primary schools in Malawi, children fail to master certain knowledge or skills because they do not have past experience and determination or because the knowledge or skill is teacher centered and they do not have much to do with it (Wiggins et al., 1994).

Factors Contributing to Unsafe School

An unsafe school is associated with a number of factors; these factors are a cause of fear and anxiety in teachers and children. In most schools, violence stands out as the most disruptive behavior in the learning process. Studies have shown that the media, changes in the

family, lack of role models, lack of attention by school systems, poor supervision, minimal engagement of pupils in school activities, and biological and psychological problems escalate school violence and contribute to unsafe schools (Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Warner et al., 1999). The factors contributing to unsafe schools include individual differences, family and school problems, peer and community influence.

Individual Differences

A large number of disruptive behaviors are committed because of individual differences (Black, 20002; Malek, Chang. and Davis, 1998; Warner et al. 1999). Children are likely to show these differences because the hyperactive are provocative and are likely to disagree with others. In public primary schools in Malawi, this characteristic seems to favor male rather than female gender, which may be a result of boys being socialized in roles that encourage physical aggression. Studies have also shown that male gender generally uses force to express hostility toward others while female gender uses indirect and verbal forms of showing hostility, such as character defamation (Everett and Price, 1995; Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; O’Keefe, 1997).

Children that are quiet and withdrawn may also be disruptive. According to Harper and Ibrahim (1999) quiet and withdrawn children could be disruptive due to a persistent feeling of being psychologically hurt and with an urge to retaliate against those who hurt them. These psychological hurts could include feelings of rejection, abandonment, and marginalized by parents, school and peers. In an in-depth evaluation of social contexts to the middle school and high school students, Lockwood (1997) found that youths were able to justify 84% of their violent behaviors. The study also reported that 28.8% said they acted violently in retaliation for harmful behavior; 17.7% said it was because the other youths were offensive; 13.6% said it was in self-defense; 12.6% acted to help a friend; 6.6% was because they were angered; and 5.6% were pushed into it by another youth. Other studies have also found that youths react to provocative actions (Bosworth, Espleage, and Simon, 1999; Everett and Price, 1995; Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Malek et al., 1998; Sumer & Aydin, 2000).

Family Problems

A family is an important organization in molding the child's behavior because the child's home background and attitudes of parents have more influence over his and her behavior (Mortimore et al., 1983). Where a family has no clear rules, no monitoring strategies for children's social interactions and behavior, no use of severe discipline actions, children are likely to engage in violent behavior (Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Luna, 2002; Neufeld, 2002). In Malawi one-parent families and a majority of families have problems in giving kids their needs such as time, energy, earnings and guidance (Everett and Price, 1995; Skelly, 1998). Although Zinsmeister (1990) had found that children from one-parent families were mostly late to school, truant, subjected to disciplinary action and were likely to dropout from school, in Malawi the scenario also happens to families with both parents because a large number of them are poor and have many family problems. According to Sumer and Aydin (2000), parental neglect, lack of parental love, lack of care and lack of guidance have damaging effects on the youth. In a study of 11 and 12 year olds conducted in Turkey, Sumer and Aydin found that parents had physically abused 25.8% of the children. More than forty-five percent of those abused were found subject to anger attacks and showed extreme violence.

Cultural beliefs play a role in children's violent behavior in Malawi where bullying, harassment and other forms of violence are seen as part of growing-up. Usually adults in Malawi use put-downs and threats in parenting and in their personal relationships with children. As a result children endure the pain and look at it as part of their growing up (Bosworth et al., 1999; Neufeld, 2002). Similar examples are found in Turkey where the government has put tougher measures to stop using force in disciplining students, but teachers are still using force. Parents escalate this behavior; they ask teachers to treat children harshly in line with their culture and attitude toward children (Sumer and Aydin, 2000). In a study conducted in Turkey, Sumer and Aydin (2000) found that 59% of the parents in the rural areas accepted corporal punishment of a disobedient youth. Bosworth et al. (1999) also found higher scores from students who were asked to agree with beliefs that supported violence.

School Problems

Youth spend much of their time in and around the school; therefore, it is believed that they demonstrate more of their violent behavior in school than in any other place (Fitzpatrick, 1999). One study showed that 40% of all violence and more than 60% of theft against youth between the ages of 12 and 19 takes place in and around the school (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991). Warner et al. (1999) and Harber (2001) said that such behavior occurs more in schools that are in the urban areas. These schools are mostly large with large school population and overcrowded classrooms. In such schools some children feel unknown, isolated, powerless and cannot be involved in anything.

In other schools leadership is disorganized and becomes the cause of violent behavior. Schools with such leadership have few resources, poor organization, and poor administration where the faculty do not work together to solve problems. For example such schools have no rules for students' conduct; have extremely restrictive rules; have no teaching instructions that allow students involvement (Slovak and Singer, 2000; Sumer and Aydin, 2000; Warner et al., 1999).

Lack of classroom motivation is yet another contributing factor to children's violence in school. In Malawi negligence of duty and lack of training on the part of teachers is a contributing factor to classroom motivation. Malawi opted for Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994, and it resulted into the rise of primary school enrolment and a shortage of teachers. Therefore, recruitment of untrained teachers, teachers without the ethics of teaching profession was instituted to solve the situation. But pupils are easily bored especially when there is nothing worthwhile in the classroom or in school (Black, 2002; Everett and Price, 1995). When they are bored, they have little connection to school life and don't even participate in school activities (Black, 2002). In a study of 726 students in grades 7-12, Everett and Price (1995) found 30% of non-white students, 15% of white students, 21% male and 15% female students had reported that boredom and lack of motivation to learn was a major contributing factor to violent behavior.

Peer Influence

Children's relationships from an early age are important because they shape their psychological and sociological development (Mortimore et al., 1983). According to Maslow

(1973) and Hendrikz (1986), children will seek to have affectionate relations with others and will strive to achieve their goal. Literature has asserted that peer relationship in school are a source of pupil violence due to peer rejection and competition for status related confrontation (Elliot, 1998). In a Safe School Study, Ruble (1978) found that violence tended to occur between students of similar race, gender, and those who knew each other, at least by name.

As children grow older, peers become influential on their behavior. Mortimore et al. (1983) had observed that the influence of peers especially teenagers was strong and could form a counter culture within the school. For example, Elliot (1998) believed that “Serious violence is usually associated with groups of youths that are seen as failures at school and are also rejected by conventional cliques” (p. 24). In a Students’ Perceptions of Violence in Public Schools Study, Everett and Price (1995) found that 35% responded that group/gang membership was a major cause of school violence. Herrenkohl et al. (2000) in a longitudinal study of youth development and behavior of 808 public elementary school students found that school violence was influenced by students’ involvement with peers who engaged in deviant behavior. Peer group members usually forced, encouraged or supported each other in doing things that others saw as violence (Malek et al., 1998).

Community Influence

There is a growing concern about the effects of society in which schools are situated; people attribute school violence to community influence (Cocking, 1973). “At the moment we have the curious situation where society produces its own pressures which operate against the maintenance of reasonable order in schools” (Cocking, 1973, p. 65). Considerable literature has documented the role of the media in promoting violence by attempting to present news in an objective manner without condemnation; therefore, children could regard violence as acceptable (Cocking, 1973; Raviv et al.; 1999; Sumer and Aydin, 1999). Certain communities in Malawi have a tendency to resolve their differences with school authorities through violence. Yet such communities often have been critical of school discipline while tolerating their children’s behavior. They even have questioned and opposed steps that would make school discipline more effective (Cocking 1973). In these circumstances children have seen violence succeed, and they have emulated such behavior. Some communities in Malawi are poverty-stricken and indulge in illegal markets, thereby letting their children live with

violence (Elliott, 1998; Harber, 2001; Luna, 2002). O’Keefe (1997) studying adolescents’ perceptions of violence in the communities and schools found that children learn to be violent by modeling. He asserted that violence could have an addictive effect to children when exposed to it.

Achieving a Safe School

The first thing in solving a problem is to identify the problem (Independent Project Trust, 1999). Likewise, the first task in creating a safe school is to identify the problem that confronts the school. If the problem involves the community, school programs such as organizing a community partnership, state programs, and counseling and consultation are set up to deal with the situation (Harper and Ibrahim, 1999; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 1998). If the problem involves the school, a safe and peaceful school is not achieved by chance. Such an environment has to be planned for by the whole school. If the school wants a culture of safety, it is important to have clear rules, agreed by everybody and applied equally to everybody (Independent Project Trust, 1999). IPT reported, “Learners keep to the rules better if they had a part in making those rules” (p. 25). It is important that ideas on how to prevent unsafe schools should be dependent on causes. Therefore, lack of values could lead to values education; deficit in problem solving could lead to training in conflict resolution; psychological problems could also lead to assessment and treatment (O’Donnell, 2001). Generally, counseling and consultation, classroom management, and zero tolerance policy would be a good start in achieving a safe school.

Counseling and Consultation

Children in the public primary schools in Malawi need to be assisted if their behavior is to become exemplary. Harper and Ibrahim (1999) stressed that counselors play an important role in schools by providing support and counseling for children identified as at risk. Counselors have helped students connect thought and feelings with the subjects they are learning. Counselors also have helped teachers do more group counseling and guidance and helped to create courses that would be dedicated to addressing life issues, human relations, multicultural concerns and psychological adjustments. Counselors also have helped parents

improve their role of rearing the children, recognizing signs of distress and possible violent behavior. Counselors have assisted in developing and maintaining peer mediating groups, peer group counseling, and in supervising school activities. Through such supervision of school activities, counselors have encouraged more youths to participate and get involved in problem solving, conflict resolution and decision-making about their own school environment (Harper and Ibrahim, 1999; Luna, 2002; NCES, 1998; Warner et al., 1999).

Conflict resolution is one important aspect in creating a safe school. A safe school should have structures for resolving conflicts that occur in the school. One of the conflict resolution structures is peer mediation program. Peer mediation is an effective, well-defined, step-by-step program for peer conflict resolution (Harper and Ibrahim, 1999; IPT, 1999). In peer mediation, learners have been trained in conflict resolution so they can act as go-between for two people or a group of people when a conflict occurs. The program aims at mediating students' through fellow students. The idea is that the mediators can be called upon as soon as the conflict arises, before it gets too serious and before it leads to violence (IPT, 1999).

Classroom Management

Good teaching is a prerequisite to creating a safe school. IPT (1999) stated, "Good teaching will make a better, more peaceful school where learners feel that their school is worth protecting" (p. 26). Good teaching starts with good lesson preparation. A good lesson has clear aims, instructions, explanations, and a variety of tasks. It is interactive and involves learners. Good teaching can impact the quality of student life and can help create a safe school. That done teachers should make efforts to mark learners' work thoroughly to assure them that their work is important and that they care about what they do. They should also demonstrate positive behaviors such as patience, confidence, enthusiasm, warm, consistence and reliability (IPT, 1999). If classroom teaching is good, learners get interested; and when they feel they are making progress, they participate in their learning and the school has fewer discipline cases (IPT, 1999; Mortimore et al., 1983).

Creating a safe school requires a concerted effort. The management, teachers, and learners should be open and be able to seek assistance and to participate in school activities. But teachers in public primary schools in Malawi have maintained a culture of silence; they

have pretended they have no problems in their classrooms. This culture has made it difficult to inspire them to create a safe school.

Zero Tolerance Policy

A zero tolerance policy has been one of the many disciplinary actions schools have undertaken to react to disciplinary issues (NCES, 1998). Zero tolerance policy is a school or district policy mandating that schools suspend or expel students for incidents of school violence (NCES, 1998; O'Donnell, 2001). In a Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey on school violence, 1996-97, about 90% of schools in the United States reported having zero tolerance policy (NCES, 1998).

Self-study Process in Addressing School Problems

The teaching profession has required constant professional development to become better equipped to meet learners' learning needs (Supovitz and Christman, 2005). Such professional development has been done through workshops, seminars and training. These workshops, seminars and training have been carried out at district levels as well as on a school basis. One type of school-based professional development is the self-study process. The self-study process is a collaborative professional learning process that focuses on influencing each other's learning and development (Supovitz, and Christman, 2005; Zellermyer and Margolin, 2005).

The self-study process is an important tool because it encourages teachers to inquire and to participate in constructing new knowledge about their teaching through conversation. The communities that have used the self-study process believe that the schools have become safer and more orderly (Supovitz and Christman, 2005). In addition, they have claimed that participants in the communities were more connected to their communities because of the improvements they experienced.

The organization of the communities is such that it assists the schools to work without much difficulty. A school can choose to have a small or many small communities operating within the school. Each community could focus on an instructional practice. School leadership in these communities has been an important factor. The school leaders have needed

to support the communities with materials for a systematic inquiry into the relationship between teaching and learning. Furthermore, the leaders themselves should be knowledgeable about the effectiveness of the communities' work (Supovitz and Christman, 2005). Then they should provide arrangements necessary for the activities. In addition to developing planned activities, the teachers should put in place an assessment procedure for feedback about their practice and their learners' progress.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Building a safe environment for teachers, students and school administrators is an important component of a school operation. An unsafe environment creates negative effects on teachers' morale, students' academic achievement, and the running of the school. This study was conducted to develop a school-wide self-study process for enhancing a safe learning environment in one primary school in Malawi.

The study was both descriptive and qualitative. First information was sought on the perceptions of teachers about themselves and the school. The opinions and experiences found from the survey (Appendix E) and the self-assessment form (Appendix F) were used to develop a self-study process for enhancing a safe environment for pupil learning in the public primary school. Through the use of the survey and the task force group the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What were teachers' perceptions of the school environment in one primary school in Malawi, specifically about maintenance, discipline and safety?
2. What happened when teachers used a self-study process to improve safety in one primary school in Malawi?

Permission to Research

Permission to conduct this study was received from the Ministry of Education (MOE) (Appendix A, B, and C) and from the Coordinating Primary Education Advisor (CPEA). The CPEA was the responsible PEA for the town zone in which the study was conducted. Both the MOE and CPEA were informed of the purpose, data collection procedures, research questions and data analysis techniques used. Furthermore, permission was received from the head teacher and teachers of the classes at the selected public primary school. Both the head and the teachers were informed of the purpose, the data collection procedures and the research questions of the study. Both the head teacher and the participating teachers signed individual informed consent forms (Appendix D).

Data Sources and Collection

The data collected in this study included (1) a survey completed by teachers in one public primary school in Malawi, (2) field notes written by the researcher during the task force meetings, (3) exit slips written by the task force members based on school safety meetings, and (4) culminating interviews with task force members about the self-study process and implementation of strategies for enhancing a safe learning environment in their school.

The Survey

The instrument was locally developed. Its items were adapted from two sources. The first sources were surveys – the Aggression Scale (Orpinas and Frankowski, 2001), Youth Self-Reporting Survey (O’Keefe, 1997), and MetLite Survey (Everett and Price, 1995). The second sources were two handbooks, a Handbook on Primary School Administration and a Handbook for Inspectors (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1982; Ministry of Education and Culture, 1982).

The survey, which answered the first research question, “What were teachers’ perceptions of the school environment in one public primary school in Malawi, specifically about maintenance, discipline and safety?” sought opinions of teachers’ perceptions about the following survey questions:

1. Does a selected public primary school maintain school buildings, grounds, equipment and records to sustain teaching and learning?
2. What were the teachers’ perceptions about behaviors of both teachers and pupils in this public primary school that required disciplinary action?
3. What were the perceptions of teachers about safety in this school?

The instrument had 69 items; these were grouped into four sections (Appendix E). Section A asked teachers to report about the overall maintenance of the school; section B asked teachers to report about the overall behaviors of teachers and pupils in the school; section C asked teachers to report about the overall safety in the school. All questions in the three sections consisted of closed item response formats (Everett and Price, 1995). Section D asked

teachers about demographic questions. The instrument adopted a numerical rating scale. The rating scale allowed participants to indicate their judgment about their feelings (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 2002). The participants were asked to circle a number from 1 - 4 to indicate their responses, with 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree, and 4 strongly agree. Or in some cases with 1 often, 2 sometimes, 3 rarely, and 4 never.

Validity was considered in developing the survey instrument to determine that it indeed measured what it claimed to measure (Ary et al. 2002). Experts were used; they assisted in developing and reviewing a draft of the survey instrument to increase validity. The suggestions made by these experts were incorporated into the final instrument. The Principal of St. Joseph's Primary Teachers' Training College also completed the survey. As a local expert, she too made suggestions on the content and ease of completion. The suggestions were incorporated in the final instrument.

Pre-testing of the survey instrument was done immediately after the draft instrument was completed. Pre-testing was conducted at St. Joseph's Demonstration Primary School, a demonstration school for St. Joseph's Primary Teachers' Training College in Dedza. Participants were 12 primary school teachers (6 males and 6 females). The teachers involved had a wide teaching experience. All of them had taught for more than six years. Among them were teachers who were teaching in the infant, junior and senior classes.

After the completion of the survey, participating teachers made some comments and corrected spelling mistakes of some words. They reported that the questions were well understood and were relevant to primary school issues in Malawi. They felt the questions were well completed, had no redundancies, and would generate the information required. The comments and corrections were incorporated into the final survey instrument. In all, there was not much to revise. Using the findings of the pilot study, statistical analyses were computed for reliability of the items in the survey to determine the internal consistency (Ary et al. 2002). Those items, which were not consistent, were revised.

There were 28 primary school teachers (5 males and 23 females) who completed the survey from the public primary schools in Malawi selected for the study. The number of female teachers was very high, 23 with only 5 males. The high number of females was because urban schools tend to have more women teachers in Malawi following their husbands who work with other departments.

Thirty-eight surveys were distributed to teachers for completion and a total of 28 teachers responded and returned the surveys to the head teacher. Ten teachers did not respond. Of the 28 surveys received no survey was discarded due to not being completed or because of incorrect completion. Those who participated in the survey had diverse teaching experience ranging from 1 to 20 years and above. Four teachers indicated having taught for less than five years; ten teachers had taught for 6 - 10 years; nine teachers had taught for 11 - 15 years; four teachers had taught for 16 - 20 years; and one had taught for 21 years and above. These teachers taught different classes too. Seven teachers indicated that they taught in the infant classes, standards 1 and 2; two teachers taught in the junior classes, standards 3 and 4; nine teachers taught in standards 5 and 6, while 10 teachers taught in the senior classes, standards 7 and 8. Roughly, there was an average of four teachers per class; the head teacher had no class.

The Task Force

The selection of the task force members was done with the assistance of the head teacher. The members of the task force were five teachers -- 2 males and 3 females selected from the members of staff at the selected public primary school. One member of the task force was the head teacher himself; he represented the administration and assisted with administrative issues in the study. Of the four members of the task force, one teacher represented teachers in the infant classes, standards 1 and 2. Another teacher represented teachers in the junior classes, standards 3 to 5. And two teachers represented teachers in the senior classes, standards 6 to 8.

The head teacher was an experienced teacher with 21 years of service. From 1979 to 1987, he worked as a primary school teacher. In 1987 he was promoted to a District Inspector of Schools (DIS) now PEA (Primary Education Advisor) and he worked at the Regional Education Office for the Central Region in Lilongwe. Between 1993 and 2002 he worked as a PEA. He worked in Chimwangalu Zone, Dedza west (1993 - 1995), in Maonde Zone, Dedza west (1996 - 1999), and in Makota Zone, Dedza northeast (2000 - 2002). In 2003 he became head teacher for Government Primary School after he was promoted to professional officer grade, P8. The head teacher had attended different in-service courses. From 1991 to 1993 he was a student with Brandon University at Malawi Institute of Education (MIE). From 1995 to

1996 he went back to MIE for his advanced course with Brandon University. In both courses he obtained his regular and advanced certificates.

The teacher from the infant class was a MIITEP (Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme) student and had worked for four years. At the time of this study, she was reading for her Malawi School Certificate Examinations (MSCE) to improve her academic, MSCE grades. She was a T3 teacher and was a member of the sanitation committee. The teacher from the junior class was a T2 teacher and a holder of a Malawi School Certificate (MSC). She had been teaching for 10 years and was deputy section head. The teacher in standard 8 was a T2 teacher and had taught for 10 years. He was the chairperson for sanitation committee. But this participant withdrew after attending only two meetings. The teacher in standard 6 had been teaching for 8 years. At the time of this study, she was reading for her MSCE to improve her academic, MSCE grades. She was a T3 teacher, a vice chairperson for sports, and secretary for AIDS Toto committee.

The task force engaged in a self-study process designed to answer the second research question, “What process did one public primary school in Malawi develop to enhance school safety?” The task force sought to answer the following focus question: “What can we do to achieve a safe environment for pupil learning?”

Field notes were collected in all the task force meetings. Notes were taken in each meeting and then developed later after the meeting. Data remembered after the full field notes were developed were incorporated into the full field notes. Included in the field notes were minutes of each meeting, quotes that revealed participants’ feelings and reactions, and researcher’s comments about what was going on in the task force meetings. The information obtained was constantly compared to ensure that it tallied with the task force focus question and the purpose of the study.

Members of the task force completed a self-assessment form in which they did two tasks (Appendix F). First they identified, from personal reflection, positive behaviors they did in their classrooms that made children feel safe. The behaviors identified were shared and then practiced in the classrooms, where participating teachers did more of them than before. Second they responded whether they strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed or strongly agreed with behaviors given and why. These were negative behaviors, which they did in their classrooms, that made children fearful and feel unsafe. The negative behaviors were not

shared openly, but the teachers practiced eliminating them side by side with emphasizing the positive behaviors.

The task force group members used exit slips at the end of each of their meetings. The exit slips were used because time was a limiting factor and we could not exhaust discussing everything about teacher behaviors in each meeting. Exit slips were also used to give members of the task force who felt dominated a rare opportunity to express their feelings without being censured. In the exit slips members wrote briefly what they learnt in the meetings, their impressions, observations and feelings about the discussions. They wrote and shared with me what they did not share with the other members in the meetings such as problems encountered in their classrooms and negative behaviors that they kept confidential.

Each of the four participating teachers participated in a 25 - 30 minute in-depth, semi-structured interview in which five questions were asked:

1. You participated in the development of the self-study process, what was your role?
2. What happened since the process started?
3. Tell me something about the self-assessment form. Would you say that the behaviors teachers displayed in their classrooms were different from what you expected?
4. Suppose there was a new pupil in your classroom. How would the pupil perceive your classroom?
5. Some teachers could say that teachers who want to have a safe learning environment for their pupils need not follow this self-study process. What would you say to them?

The interviewer's responses included active listening, follow-up questions for clarity, and a minimum encouragement. Follow up questions included:

“Tell me more about that?”

“Who else was involved?”

“When did that happen?”

“What about your class?”

“Would you elaborate on that?”

Data consisted of approximately two hours of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The audiotapes from the in-depth interviews were transcribed.

The setting of the interviews was at the school where the research was carried out. The school was situated in a busy location surrounded by dwelling houses and a busy market 200

meters to the east. During the last week of our research there came 30 student teachers from one of the teacher training colleges. Since there were only two teachers' houses inside the school fence, the student teachers were accommodated in the staff room and the head teacher's office. As a matter of fact, there were ten student teachers in the head teacher's office. There was no room for the head teacher so he temporarily moved his office to the storeroom. The interviews were done in this storeroom. There was little room because there were a lot of things in there. As one entered the storeroom, was met with a steel cabinet, close to it were two office chairs. To the right, close to the western and southern walls, was the head teacher's table facing the north. To his right was yet another steel cabinet. The room was surrounded with bookshelves pinned to the three walls. It had two small windows fastened with security bars. There was enough light in the room, but ventilation was poor so that on a hot day it became unbearable.

Data Analysis

Analysis of Survey Data

Descriptive statistics were used to report respondents' perceptions on maintenance of the school, behaviors of teachers and pupils in the school, and safety in the school as reported in the survey (Appendix E). The data organization and summaries were shown in frequency distribution tables. Frequencies and percentages in the tables indicated opinions of participants calculated on the basis of the entire survey sample (Rea and Parker, 1997). The missing opinions appeared in the tables as dashes (-) indicating no opinion. The percentage summaries displayed sum up to a 100%. Tables were numbered for easy identification. They had titles to show what the tables represented. Items in the tables were put in a logical sequence as they appeared in the survey according to their sections. And sections that had relatively small or large responses were still indicated.

Analysis of Task Force Data

The analysis began with reading of the field notes and exit slips. The field notes and the exit slips were developed into vignettes. Each vignette consisted of in-depth description of what took place during each meeting. The data summary of findings was shown in a summary table. Each table was numbered for easy identification and bore a title showing what it

represented. The interview data were read, and notes, comments, observations and queries were written in the margins. The notes, comments, observations, and queries in the margins that seemed to go together were grouped (Merriam, 2001). These groupings/categories assisted in developing the self-study process results and the reflection on the process of the task force activities. The categories identified in the interview transcripts were teachers' behavioral change, efficient planning for effective teaching, and pupils behavioral change. Each of these consisted of in-depth description of teachers' classroom experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter reports on the findings of the study that was conducted in one of the public primary schools in Malawi. The school, which opened in 2001 in Dedza, was situated in a busy location surrounded by dwelling houses and a busy market 200 meters to the east. It had a total of 38 teachers and 1,524 pupils, 792 girls and 732 boys. The study was both descriptive and qualitative and was basically designed to develop and conduct a self-study process for enhancing a safe learning environment for pupils.

For the descriptive part of the study, the teachers in the selected school completed a survey about factors contributing to a safe and unsafe learning environment. The research question for this part of the study was, “What were teachers’ perceptions of school environment in one primary school in Malawi, specifically about maintenance, discipline and safety?” From the research question, the survey sought opinions of teachers’ perceptions about the following focus questions: “Does a selected public primary school maintain school buildings, grounds, equipment and records to sustain teaching and learning?” “What were the teachers’ perceptions about behaviors of both teachers and pupils in this public primary school that required disciplinary action?” and “What were the perceptions of teachers about safety in this school?”

For the qualitative part of the study, a task force was formed from among the teachers in the school to develop a process for enhancing a safe learning environment. The research question for this portion of the study was, “What happened when teachers used the self-study process to improve safety in one primary school in Malawi?” From the research question, the task force members answered the following focus question, “What can we do to achieve a safe environment for pupil learning?”

Survey Findings

Data from the survey (Appendix E) were classified into three categories on the basis of teachers’ perceptions about the school. There were differences in their perceptions and the

unique features that were pertinent with each category have been highlighted. Each category had different items, which were analyzed separately. The categories were school maintenance, teachers' and students' behaviors, and safety in the school. In the category on maintenance of the school, the teachers were asked to mark a series of items as “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “agree,” or “strongly agree” that collectively responded to the survey question, “Did the selected public primary school maintain school buildings and grounds, equipment, and school records to sustain teaching and learning?”

The responses of the classroom teachers, $n = 28$, were analyzed using descriptive statistics to obtain their frequencies. Table 1 refers to maintenance of the school buildings and grounds; this component is related to school facilities. The table summarizes the general opinions of teachers' perceptions about how school buildings and grounds were maintained. Generally, the school buildings and grounds were well maintained but some facilities were not well maintained. Seventy-five percent of the teachers reported that classroom walls were dirty; over 78 percent of the teachers reported that children latrines were marked; over 60 percent of the teachers reported that their classroom doors were not maintained.

Table 2 refers to maintenance of school equipment in response to the survey question, “Did the selected public primary school maintain school buildings and grounds, equipment, and school records to sustain teaching and learning?” This component was also related to school facilities. The table summarizes the general opinions of teachers' perceptions about how school equipment was maintained. On the whole the school equipment was well maintained except for books and children latrines. Over 35 percent of the teachers reported that school buildings were not maintained; over 46 percent of the teachers reported teachers' books were worn out; and over 89 percent of them reported that children's books were in tatters.

Table 3 refers to maintenance of school records in response to the survey question, “Did the selected public primary school maintain school buildings and grounds, equipment, and school records to sustain teaching and learning?” These school records referred to administrative books, which the head teacher and teachers keep at the school. School records were also related to school facilities. The school records were in general well maintained except for the school punishment book and copies of Malawi syllabi. Fifty-seven percent of

Table 1: Maintenance of School Buildings and Grounds

Item	Opinion							
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
School buildings are maintained regularly	6	21.4	4	14.3	13	46.4	5	17.9
The classroom floors are in good condition (not damaged or dirty)	1	3.6	1	3.6	16	57.1	1	35.7
Classroom walls are clean	3	10.7	18	64.3	7	25.0	-	-
Classroom windows are intact	2	7.1	-	-	15	53.6	4	14.3
Classroom doors are intact	1	3.6	1	3.6	9	32.2	2	7.1
Children use their latrines properly	5	17.9	17	60.7	6	21.4	-	-
The school grounds are kept clean	3	10.7	3	10.7	2	7.1	2	7.1

Note: Dashes indicate no opinion.
 Total percentage for all opinion is 100%
 Total number of participates for all items are 28

Table 2: Maintenance of School Equipment

Item	Opinion							
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Teachers books are in good condition (clean, not torn or written in)	3	10.7	10	35.7	11	39.3	4	14.3
Children's books are in good condition	15	53.6	10	35.7	2	7.1	1	3.6
Charts are displayed in the classrooms	-	-	-	-	19	67.9	9	32.1
Teaching and learning materials, designed to support learning are kept in the classroom	1	3.6	5	17.8	15	53.6	7	25.0

Note: Dashes indicate no opinion in the category.
Total percentage for all opinion is 100%.
Total number of participates for all items are 28.

Table 3. Maintenance of School Records

Item	Opinion							
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The school has admission register	2	7.1	-	-	12	42.9	14	50.0
The school has daily attendance register	-	-	-	-	8	28.6	20	71.4
The school has staff minute book	-	-	-	-	7	25.0	21	75.0
The school has pupils' progress records	-	-	-	-	9	32.1	19	67.9
The school has daily routine programs	1	3.6	3	10.7	17	60.7	7	25.0
The school has visitors' book and all visitors sign	-	-	-	-	9	32.1	19	67.9
The school has a punishment book	7	25.1	9	32.1	8	28.6	4	14.3
Teachers have copies of Malawi syllabi	4	14.3	11	39.3	8	28.5	5	17.9
Teachers keep schemes and records of work	-	-	-	-	6	21.4	22	78.4
Teachers write daily lesson plans	-	-	-	-	8	8.6	20	71.4
Teachers have individual class time tables	-	-	2	7.1	5	17.9	21	75.0
Teachers have class stock book	-	-	-	-	10	35.7	18	64.3
The school has adequate numbers of qualified teachers	2	7.1	1	3.6	7	25.0	18	64.3
The Headteacher delegates duties	5	17.5	2	7.1	12	42.9	9	32.1
Students are involved in the running of the school	2	7.1	7	25.0	12	42.9	7	25.0

Note: Dashes indicate no opinion.
Total percentage for all opinion is 100%.
Total number of participates for all items are 28.

the teachers reported having not seen the school punishment book. Slightly more than 50 percent of the teachers reported having not seen any copy of Malawi syllabi.

The question on teachers' and students' behavior, teachers were asked to mark "strongly disagree," "disagree," "agree," or "strongly agree" in response to items in the survey question, "What were the teachers' perceptions about the relationships in the school between teachers and pupils, teachers and the head teacher, and school and the community?" Table 4 refers to data pertaining to those relationships. By and large the relationships in the school were well maintained except for the relationship between the teachers and the head teacher, which was an issue. Slightly more than 67 percent of the teachers indicated a poor relationship between the head teacher and staff.

Table 5 refers to teachers' and students' behaviors in the school, i.e. negative or positive behaviors that teachers and students display to others. Data in table 5 is in response to the survey question, "What were the teachers' perceptions about behaviors of both teachers and pupils in this public primary school that required disciplinary action?" Generally, teachers and students work with each other cooperatively except for negative behaviors that are displayed in the school. Seven percent of the teachers reported that students often discriminated against students of other religions; approximately ten percent reported that teachers often discriminated against other teachers based on ethnic groups; seven percent of the teachers reported that boys often harass girls and the same percentage reported that girls harassed boys; over three percent of teachers reported that they often have knowledge of students who smoke marijuana; and over three percent acknowledged that they often have knowledge of students who drink beer.

On the question about safety in the school, the 28 teachers were asked to mark "often," "sometimes," "rarely," or "never" in response to teachers' and students' unsafe behaviors, behaviors that are not accepted in Malawi primary schools. Table 6 reports data in response to the survey question, "What were the perceptions of teachers about safety in this school?" On the whole teachers' and students' unsafe behaviors were not common occurrences in the school. But those that were displayed were issues of concern. About 46 percent of the teachers reported that pupils sometimes fight among each other in the school; 28 percent reported that pupils sometimes threaten other pupils; slightly more than 3 percent reported that pupils'

Table 4: Relationships in the School

Item	Opinion							
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Teacher and pupil ratio supports maximum learning	3	10.7	8	28.6	13	46.4	4	14.3
Teacher and pupil relationships are positive	-	-	3	10.7	20	71.4	5	17.9
Headteacher and staff relationships are positive	9	32.1	10	35.7	8	28.6	1	3.6
School and community relationships are positive	1	3.6	11	39.3	16	57.1	-	-

Note: Dashes indicate no opinion.

Total percentage for all opinion is 100%.

Total number of participates for all items are 28.

Table 5: Teachers' and Students' Behaviors in the School

Item	Opinion							
	Often F	%	Sometimes F	%	Rarely F	%	Never F	%
Groups of students discriminate against other students based on religion	2	7.1	5	17.9	4	14.3	17	60.7
Groups of students discriminate against other students based on ethnic group	3	10.7	3	10.7	2	7.1	20	71.4
Teachers discriminate against other teachers based on ethnic group	3	10.7	2	7.1	5	17.9	18	64.3
Boys harass girls	2	7.1	6	21.4	10	35.7	10	35.7
Girls harass boys	-	-	8	28.6	10	35.7	10	35.7
In-group work, girls and boys form separate groups	-	-	4	14.3	3	10.7	21	75.0
Teachers work with other teachers cooperatively	17	60.7	6	21.4	3	10.7	2	7.1
Students work with teachers cooperatively	15	53.6	7	25.0	4	14.3	2	7.1
Students work with other students cooperatively	10	35.7	14	50.0	2	7.1	2	7.1
Teachers have knowledge of students who smoke marijuana	1	3.6	6	21.4	10	35.7	11	39.3
Teachers have knowledge of students who drink beer	1	3.6	10	35.7	8	28.6	9	32.1
Teachers show tolerance for others	17	60.7	5	17.9	4	14.3	2	7.1
Students show tolerance for others	10	35.7	13	46.4	4	14.3	1	3.6

Note: Dashes indicate no opinion.
Total percentage for all opinion is 100%.
Number of participates for all items are 28.

Table 6: Teachers' and Students' Unsafe Behaviors

Item	Opinion							
	Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Students get into fights	-	-	13	46.4	12	42.9	3	10.7
Students threaten other students	-	-	8	28.6	18	64.3	2	7.1
Students threaten teachers	1	3.6	4	14.3	5	17.8	18	64.3
Teachers threaten students	1	3.6	4	14.3	10	35.7	13	46.4
Students call other students bad names	1	3.6	7	25.0	12	42.8	8	28.6
Teachers call students bad names	-	-	3	10.7	10	35.7	15	53.6
Students tease other students	1	3.6	3	10.7	7	25.0	17	60.7
Teachers tease students	-	-	-	-	7	25.0	21	75.0
Students break windows	2	7.1	10	35.8	10	35.7	6	21.4
Students mark classroom walls	2	7.1	10	35.7	11	39.3	5	17.9
Students mark toilet walls	5	17.9	10	35.7	7	25.0	6	21.4
Students mark desks	7	25.0	13	46.4	6	21.5	2	7.1
Students remove teaching and learning materials from the classrooms	7	25.0	15	53.6	3	10.7	3	10.7
Students steal others' property	2	7.1	21	75.0	3	10.8	2	7.1
Students steal school property	1	3.6	12	42.8	10	35.7	5	17.9
Teachers steal school property	-	-	3	10.8	2	7.1	23	82.1
Students destroy school property	6	21.5	9	32.1	10	35.7	3	10.7

Note: Dashes indicate no opinion.
Total percentage is 100%.
Number of participants is 28.

often threaten teachers; and the same percentage reported that teachers' often threaten pupils and that pupils often called other pupils bad names. Seven percent of teachers reported that pupils often break windows; twenty-five percent of them reported that pupils often remove teaching and learning materials in the classroom; and 75 percent of the teachers reported that pupils sometimes steal others' property.

Table 7 refers to feelings of teachers about their school, how they live with fellow teachers and pupils. The table answers the survey question, "What were the perceptions of teachers about safety in this school?" Generally the feelings of the teachers about the school showed that they liked the school although they did not trust some members of staff. A quarter of the teachers did not trust other members of staff; half of the teachers reported unfriendliness of some members of staff in the school; and a quarter of the teachers reported that pupils did not like each other.

Task Force Findings

The second part of this study centered on observing the process that a school task force went through to develop and implement strategies for making a safe learning environment in their classes. I contacted the head teacher of the selected school on November 23, 2004, to ask for permission to use the school for this study. It was an urban school and was one of the schools that had large numbers of teachers (38) and pupils (1524), 732 were boys and 792 were girls. The average enrolment per class was 90 for standards 1 to 6 and 60 for standards 7 and 8. The school was relatively new; it was opened in May 2001 and was secured with a brick fence. It was situated in a busy location surrounded by dwelling houses and a busy market 200 meters to the east. The school had eight classroom blocks and each block contained two classrooms; it had four blocks of pupils' restrooms, two blocks of water system, and one block of pit latrines; and it also had one administration block which contained the head teacher's office, storeroom, staff room, staff restrooms, and a kitchen.

The head teacher agreed to identify task force members from among his staff. The head teacher selected five teachers, two males and three females. One member was the head teacher himself who represented the administration. Four members represented teachers from

Table 7: Feelings of Teachers about the School

Item	Opinion							
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
I like this school	2	7.1	-	-	12	42.9	14	50.0
I intend to teach at this school for sometime	2	7.1	2	7.2	15	53.6	9	32.1
I love the students in my class	-	-	-	-	7	25.0	21	75.0
I trust my fellow members of staff	3	10.7	4	14.3	11	39.3	10	35.7
Everyone is friendly at this school	2	7.1	12	42.9	10	35.7	4	14.3
Students are liked by other students	-	-	7	25.0	16	57.1	5	17.9

Note: Dashes indicate no opinion.

Total percentage for opinions is 100%.

Total number of participates for all items are 28.

infant, junior, and senior classes. And the sixth member was I. At the end of the meeting, we agreed to have our first task force meeting on Monday November 29, 2004.

First Task Force Meeting

I entered the head teacher's office at 8:50 a.m. on November 29, 2004, because the meeting was to start at 9:00 a.m. The head teacher was at his table dozing, waiting for me to arrive. He was slim in appearance and looked neat in his gray suit. He greeted me and told me that the meeting would be starting late because we had to wait for one of the task force members. He added that another member had sent in a note saying that she was unable to attend the meeting because she had gone home where she was being expected. We both worried about this absence and considered finding another task force member. Unfortunately, many teachers in Malawi tend to shun such meetings especially when there are no material benefits. While we waited for the task force to assemble, we spent the time discussing the weather and the skyrocketing prices of farm inputs' such as fertilizer.

The first meeting was held in a classroom for standard 6b. It was a rectangular room with steel windows on its front and back (south and north) walls. The black chalkboard was to the east of the classroom close to the door. The wooden door could be opened at the bottom or at the top. The western wall had a few teaching and learning materials pasted here and there. There were two wooden desks and one table arranged for the meeting in the room. The two desks faced the chalkboard while the table was placed at the far north of the room close to the classroom cabinet. This table faced the door. The rest of the desks were neatly arranged in rows behind the participants and the classroom looked neat with that arrangement. Two members of the task force sat on wooden benches behind the two desks. The head teacher and myself sat on teachers' chairs behind the teacher's table.

The meeting opened with a prayer in which Josie asked God's guidance. After the prayer the head teacher was elected the chairperson for the project meetings, and I was elected the secretary. He welcomed the task force members and asked them to be free to work with me and asked me to do the same. He announced that two members, Patti, standard 1a teacher and Marge, standard 6a teacher were not present because of unforeseen circumstances; he then asked for self-introductions because they were meeting me for the first time. Josie, standard 6 teacher was sitting in the first bench. He was a young man in his early thirties. He

was neatly dressed in a blue shirt, a necktie, a black pair of trousers and a pair of black shoes. Next was Tabby, standard 4b teacher, a young woman in her mid thirties, who sat between Josie and me. She too was neatly dressed in a purple dress with matching pair of shoes. Alba the head teacher sat to my left. Before I introduced myself and told them the purpose of the project. I then asked the members to fill in informed consent forms. They were all interested in the project and pledged their assistance. “We are going to assist you,” Josie said. “We are going to benefit a lot from this project. We are going to learn how to make our school a safe learning environment,” Alba said.

I then opened the discussion by briefly commenting on the public’s perception that little real teaching and learning is occurring in Malawi’s public primary schools and that many people believe safe schools could make a difference. I went on to say that their school had agreed to form a task force to develop and implement strategies for making their school a safe learning environment for pupils. I then raised the focus question for the task force work: What can we do to achieve a safe environment for pupil learning? From the focus question a lot of other questions were generated. Josie wanted to know what a safe school or safe learning environment meant. Alba answered, “You know,” he said, “we might have the same problem of understanding the meaning of safe school. If we have to create one, let us find our own meaning.” Most members did not know what a safe school was and Alba’s proposal to find our own meaning was taken seriously. We brainstormed the meaning of a safe environment or safe school; eight different meanings were sort (Table 8).

During the brainstorming exercise Josie kept saying, “Learning is indeed a continuous process.” To him the meeting was a learning process. After the eight meanings were identified, Tabby suggested that we try to summarize the eight meanings into one comprehensive meaning. We felt it was a good idea. Alba asked if it were not possible to identify a concept for each meaning and then see how connected they were and then build the meaning from there. We brainstormed Alba’s idea; then agreed that a safe learning environment should take into consideration the rights, safety, welfare and educational goals of the child. In short, we looked for an environment that addressed the needs of the child. The needs of the child not only linked with the child’s survival in the home, were also central to meaningful learning. Finally, we came up with four concepts -- social equality, security,

Table 8: Task Force's Definition of a Safe School

Is a school that:

Respects rights of the individual

Has a minimum level of violence

Has unity among its teachers, parent teachers' association and school committee

Has constructive teaching and learning

Has low levels of vandalism

Has cooperation among its teachers, parents and pupils

Its teachers, pupils and the community feel comfortable working together

Helps pupils to achieve their needs

caring, and achievement -- and we arranged the eight meanings we had generated into those four concepts (Table 9). We then summarized the thinking as: "A safe school is a caring, secured school that respects both teachers' and pupils' rights so that pupils can achieve their educational goals." We agreed to work with this meaning to achieve our safe learning environments. But Tabby was concerned with the number of things the child would need. She thought, as teachers needed not be concerned with all the needs of the child. That generated yet another discussion on the needs of the child. First, we discussed needs of the school child in general and then later classified them into needs that would be provided for by parents, teachers, fellow children, and the child herself. We concentrated on the needs pertaining to either the school or the classroom. These were described as school-oriented needs (Table 10). The school oriented needs formed the basis for the next meeting.

At the end of the meeting Alba, the chairperson, apologized to the task force members for such a lengthy meeting, but he said it was necessary that the members understood what they were expected to do. He also thanked the members for their constructive contributions in the meeting and hoped would continue to do so in the next meetings. He thanked me for the soft drinks and snacks during break time. The next meeting was scheduled for January 6, 2005.

Second Task Force Meeting

Because schools were still in session, we agreed to be meeting in the afternoons so that task force members would have time to teach in the morning. Therefore, this meeting was scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m. I had arrived in time for the meeting, but there were delays in starting the meeting because some participants had gone for lunch. I spent much of my time in Alba's office before the meeting started, where he was busy with school administrative tasks. This time the meeting was held in a classroom for standard 6a, which was almost identical to the classroom for our first meeting. We were seated in a semi-circle. Josie, was present in our first meeting, was neatly dressed in his blue shirt and black pair of trousers. Tabby was also present in our last meeting, looked neat in her pink suit and black pair of shoes. Marge and Patti were attending the meeting for the first time. Marge, slightly younger than Tabby, looked neat in her colored dress and white pair of shoes. Patti, the youngest of all, was

Table 9: Characteristics of a Safe School

Social Equality	Security	Caring	Achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect rights of the individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum level of violence• Low levels of vandalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unity among its teachers, parents and school committee• Cooperation among its teachers, parents and pupils• Teachers, pupils and community feel comfortable working together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Constructive teaching and learning• Achievement of pupils' needs

Table 10: School Oriented Needs

Praise

Responsibility

Love

Care

Guidance

Privacy

Comfort

Sympathy

Freedom

Opportunity

Attention

Satisfaction

Recognition

Advice

Respect

dressed neatly in her colored traditional wear with black pair of shoes. Alba sat between Patti and me. He was in his striped suit with a matching necktie and black shoes.

Patti opened the meeting with a prayer at 2:10 p.m. on January 4, 2005 where she asked the Lord to lead us in our deliberations. Alba, the chairperson for the meeting, welcomed and asked us to participate freely in the meeting. He apologized for starting the meeting late and he introduced the new members. After the introductions he briefed the new members on what had transpired in our last meeting. The day's agenda started with task force members completing a self-assessment form (Appendix F). The assessment form was in two parts. Part one asked them to identify things they did in their classrooms that made pupils feel good. The second part asked them to respond whether they "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree" and "strongly agree" with items that could make pupils fearful in their classrooms. After completing the assessment form, we shared the responses from part one of the assessment form.

It was a learning experience to most task force members as they shared their positive classroom behaviors. The first one to share was Patti, the standard 1a teacher. On the chalkboard, she listed "praise." Josie, the standard 8 teacher, added "teaching and learning materials" to the list. Marge, the standard 6a teacher, followed with "teaching methods"; Tabby, the standard 4b teacher, was next with "classroom responsibilities"; and then Alba, the head teacher, with "teacher participation." As the list became longer, members were able to say, "I have that item on my list." During sharing, an interesting finding was that many things that were identified were common to all members. Table 11 shows the frequencies of the findings.

Teacher participation as classroom activities did not go well with some of us. We wanted to know from Alba what he meant. Alba explained:

It only means that the teacher is always active in the classroom such as teaching, asking questions, assisting pupils, marking, giving instructions. For example, some teachers go to class to knit or to do their work. Most of us just sit there waiting for the pupils to bring their notebooks to us. You may agree with me that most teachers do not even participate in Physical Education.

"We are going to be performers," someone commented. Members laughed.

At the end of the meeting, I asked task force members to write exit slips about the meeting. Most exit slips had talked about the sharing of classrooms experiences as a learning opportunity. One exit slip written by one of the participants said:

On this day we shared the good things that we do in our classes that make pupils feel safe during learning. I learnt that we, as teachers, could provide safe-learning environments to our pupils hence there was need to change. I sincerely welcome this project because I feel at the end we will make this school a model school for all around this area.

Although I did not ask the task force members to share things that threatened pupils in their classes, they still made some comments. “We are used to pinching or beating the pupils,” then laughter. Another exit slip written by one of the participants said:

Our meeting was important to me because it had been an eye opener in the sense that I never thought beating a pupil in my classroom was wrong. Now through our discussion I have learnt to think before beating a pupil... I wish such meetings were available to all teachers.

During the exercise Josie excused himself. That was the second time he had done it. In the first meeting he went to attend to his sick wife. I had talked to the headteacher about it after the first task force meeting. He recalled that when he told Josie that most of the work would be done in the classroom, he looked surprised and disinterested.

Our findings in this meeting revealed that we needed to create safe learning environment in our classrooms. We discussed implementation strategies we would follow in creating our safe environments. We agreed to increase the rate of doing positive behaviors and decrease or stop the negative behaviors. To start with we agreed have two items, one positive and one negative behavior. From the list (Table 11) we chose praise. We were to find ways of praising the pupils more than we did. We agreed that practicing of praise would commence in the second week of first term, from January 10, 2005 to January 14, 2005. Most of us were excited with their work and wanted an immediate change in our behaviors as one exit slip written by one of the participants commented:

Table 11: Teachers' Classroom Positive Behaviors

Item	Frequency
Praising	5
Use of various teaching and learning materials, i.e. visual and audio materials	4
Use of various teaching and learning methods, i.e. pair and group work, role play, quizzes, songs	3
Gifts, i.e. exercise books, pens, rulers, cups, toys	5
Giving responsibilities, i.e. class monitors, group leaders, group secretaries	3
Giving individual help	5
Marking children's work	5
Giving encouragement	5
Encourage pupil participation	3
Teacher participation in various classroom activities	2
Changing group members	3

I must say the meeting has assisted me a lot and I believe I am going to change my bad behaviors. I must admit I saw myself punishing innocent pupils in my classroom. This was a lesson for my fellow participants and me. As I go into my class and practice the behaviors, my pupils will like the change.

At the end of the meeting the chairperson thanked all of us for our participation but reminded us to be punctual for meetings. Patti closed the meeting with a prayer in which she thanked the Lord's guidance in our work. The meeting closed after writing exit slips.

Third Task Force Meeting

The meeting was held in standard 6b classroom, our first meeting venue. The meeting started at 12:30 p.m. on January 21, 2005. At the start of the meeting the chairperson asked Patti to open the meeting with a prayer. After the prayer the chairperson welcomed us and then reported that Josie would not attend because he had gone to the hospital where his last-born baby was admitted. He also reminded the members of the last meeting's activities:

In our last meeting we had identified behaviors that made pupils feel good in their learning. Among the positive behaviors we picked praise, this was to be practiced between January 10 and 14, 2005. Since we did not meet on January 14, 2005 sharing of our classroom experiences on praise will be done in this meeting.

“What strategy are we going to follow in the reporting?” Patti asked. Patti wanted to know the reporting system since the three teachers taught different classes. The question triggered a lot of thought among us. Tabby suggested that reporting could be done class by class. The chairperson suggested if we could develop an instrument for reporting. Marge suggested that all classes at once according to relevance of their items could report. All the suggestions were weighed and we agreed to develop a reporting instrument. The chairperson wanted to know from each teacher the procedure followed in doing praise. The teachers had explained that they looked for reasons for doing it, activities to address the reasons and then observed any changes in pupils. After a discussion on the procedure we translated it into an instrument with week and date, objectives, classroom activities and remarks before reporting started. Then we used this instrument (Table 12) for reporting our classroom experiences, all classes at once according to relevance of the item.

Table 12: Teacher's Praise

Week 1: January 1 – 14

Examples from Task Force Discussion

Objectives:	Encourage pupils to participate in the lessons Make pupils feel free to contribute something in the classroom Make the lessons interesting Make pupils alert Motivate pupils Encourage slow learners to participate Make pupils more active
Classroom Activities:	Hand clapping: CRECCOM clapping (clap three times, stomp feet three times, then flashes hands, the pupil receives, pockets the good wishes) Shower hand clapping (class grinds hand then claps hands strongly once) Giving a hand (class claps hands once) Patting pupils: in a group or on individual work well done Verbal: thank you for trying, good, that's it, excellent Gestures: nodding the head, raise a thumb Gifts: pencils, exercise books, rulers, etc.
Remarks:	More pupils raised hands, answered questions correctly, followed teachers' instructions, and gave own views Absenteeism reduced After breaks pupils returned to class on time Useless noise was reduced

The sharing began with Patti, a standard 1a teacher: “I had only three objectives for praising the pupils more than I did before. I wanted to encourage pupils in my class to participate in the lessons, slow learner to participate in the lessons fully. And I wanted to make pupils more active in class.” Tabby, a standard 4b teacher had similar reasons for doing more praise in her class. Marge, a standard 6a teacher had five reasons for doing more praise in her class. “Well it appears I had more reasons than my friends possibly because my pupils were older than theirs,” she said.

The teachers also reported activities they used in their classes. For standard 1a, she had activities such hand clapping and verbal praise. “I used the usual methods of praise only that I praised almost every pupil in each class period. Since I was not recording the number of times per pupil, I can only say that I praised each pupil adequately,” Patti said. The standard 6a and the standard 4b teachers had very little differences. They used patting, gestures, verbal praise, hand clapping, and Creative Center for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) hand clapping (Table 12).

CRECCOM hand clapping was a new type of hand clapping. “I had to teach pupils how to do it otherwise it was a new experience to them,” Tabby said. The chairperson wanted to know where she had learnt it. She said she learnt it from a friend who had attended a CRECCOM workshop. CRECCOM was one of the NGOs in Malawi interested in promoting education.

Marge had also used shower hand clapping (Table 12); this too was a new type of hand clapping. Like Tabby, she too had learnt it from a friend. Both Tabby and Marge had used patting and gestures as forms of praise (Table 12). Finally we agreed that all types of praises would be done in all the classes and we encouraged the standard 1a teacher to use the other types of praise. This exit slip written by one of the participants concurred with the suggestion:

In our meeting on January 21, 2005, we shared our classroom experiences on praise. It had shown some positive reactions from pupils in the concerned classes. Personally I had learnt something especially where I failed to use some types of praises. That being the case I believe I will in the long run try to achieve whatsoever I missed. All in all I had grabbed very important issues during the meeting. It had been a good meeting.

All the three teachers said pupils felt happy when they were praised. “When I gave a CRECCOM hand clapping in my class, pupils smiled with contentment and they proudly received their good wishes,” Tabby said. The teachers said praise had encouraged pupils to do better in their academic performance in order to get more praise. Because of the praises, daily attendance and punctuality after break had improved greatly in standards 1a and 4b (Table 12).

At the end of the meeting the chairperson thanked us for working hard. In conclusion we agreed to have our next meeting on Friday January 28, 2005. We also agreed to have teaching and learning materials as our next topic. Members wrote exit slips and then closed the meeting with a prayer.

Fourth Task Force Meeting

The venue for the meeting changed; this time we used the staff room. It was a nice room with a few pictures pasted here and there. There were two doors in the staff room, one led to the kitchen and the second led to the restrooms. Tables formed a square in the middle of the room and teachers’ lockers were nailed to the northern wall. A portable board was brought in and two pupils’ benches were put close to the board for the participants. Marge in her white wax national wear (wax cloth was a new fashion in Malawi) sat on the first bench close to the door leading outside. Tabby in her gray suit sat on the second bench. Alba in his dark suit sat close to the portable board to do the writing. Behind the participants was a teacher’s chair for me.

The meeting was scheduled for 11:00 a.m. on January 28, 2005; instead it started at 12:00 noon. The chairperson opened the meeting with a prayer that he said; he then welcomed us to the day’s meeting. Before the deliberations, he reported to us that Josie and Patti would not attend because they were unwell. The members were concerned with Josie’s absences from the meetings. The chairperson, who was to take a class, reported that he had not yet found time to teach. He then asked the teachers if they were facing problems in carrying out the work. Those participants who were teaching had no serious problems, but they requested assistance in drawings and in identifying teaching and learning materials. As Tabby said, “We are not good at drawing.” And Marge said, “I think I need assistance in identifying teaching and learning materials as I find difficulties in identifying them in some topics.” We thought

Marge's request was crucial, and the head teacher had volunteered to assist. One interesting finding was reported from standard 6a where pupils were becoming unruly. We sorted out that problem as this exit slip written by one of the participants explained:

My problem was that since I started reducing the negative behaviors in my class some pupils were taking advantage of that and were causing problems. I presented my issue to the task force members. The members advised me to improve in my teaching and not to make abrupt stop to doing certain things that would make the pupils too free. Teaching and learning materials was our topic for discussion. Although Patti was sick, she had sent in her contributions. She had identified five objectives for this topic while Tabby and Marge had identified six objectives each. After a thorough discussion of the objectives, we felt that all the objectives would work for all classes (Table 13).

Alba had remarked, "You see, all of you had identified almost the same objectives and I believe that Patti had just overlooked the one objective she did not include. Because whether we like it or not, teaching and learning materials motivate pupils." Marge concurred with him, "The pupils were really interested in learning. I could tell that because they were attentive in most lessons, were eager to collect materials, and they cooperated with each other in their work."

We noted that most classroom activities involved drawing and displaying of pupils work but classification and experimentation were sparingly used. "We would like to have more chart paper for our work. You know my pupils like to see their work displayed in class," Tabby requested. Maybe that was why Tabby had previously requested to have assistance in drawing her materials. Maybe Marge wanted other materials other than charts when she requested for assistance in identifying materials for her lessons.

The three teachers had observed great interest in pupils in learning when they used teaching and learning materials so that attendance and punctuality after breaks improved. Tabby had observed, "One good example is my class. My pupils had at one time told me that they wanted to go on with learning instead of going for break." The teachers had also noted that most pupils were more active in their classes as they continued using the teaching and learning materials (Table 13).

Table 13: Teaching and Learning Materials

<u>Weeks 2 & 3: January 21-28</u>	<u>Examples from Task Force Discussions</u>
Objectives:	Help pupils use their senses (hear, touch, feel, see) Help pupils remember what they learnt Help pupils learn skills of listening, observing, sharing, and cooperating Arouse pupils interest Easy explanation of facts Make teacher and pupils active
Classroom Activities:	Observation (using charts, chalkboard, real materials) Drawing (using sand, charts, chalkboard, notebooks) Classification (flowers and other materials) Displaying (pupils work, learning materials) Experimentation: (with objects and other materials) Demonstration (using objects, charts, pupils, and teacher)
Remarks:	Pupils were active, keen to observe, draw with skills, matched objects, answered questions correctly, and asked for clarification Returned punctually after breaks Reduced absenteeism Less noise, pupils paid more attention Reduced excuses to leave the classroom

At the end of the meeting the chairperson thanked us for our contributions. We finally agreed to have our next meeting on February 4, 2005 at 10:00 a.m. We also agreed to have classroom responsibilities as our next topic for practice. The chairperson closed the meeting a prayer. Then members had written their exit slips.

Fifth Task Force Meeting

The venue of the meeting was the staff room. Nothing had changed in the room even the seating arrangement had not changed. The chairperson opened the meeting at 11:15 a.m. on February 4, 2005, with a prayer from Tabby. He welcomed us to the fifth meeting and then reminded us of our task. "This is our fourth week in the project. So far we have done praise and teaching and learning materials. I hope we have not forgotten to reduce some of our negative behaviors in our practice," he said. Patti who had not attended our last meeting regretted missing it. "When you know your friends are discussing important matters, you feel like losing. Although I sent in my work I still feel I lost something, especially the deliberations," she said. I then distributed copies of the minutes of the last two meetings. Those were given to the participants for verification, i.e. member checks. After the distribution of the minutes, the chairperson introduced the day's topic, classroom responsibilities, for discussion.

The first one to speak was Tabby, the standard 4a teacher. She had five objectives (Table 14) for giving children responsibilities in her class. "More importantly," she said, "I wanted to help pupils to accept others such as the weak, small, big, clever, stupid as leaders." The five objectives were also used in standard 6. Objectives on socialization and on creating confidence in pupils did not apply to standard 1. According to Patti, her children didn't care with whom they associated, and she did not see how they would develop confidence through responsibilities.

Marge had used four activities in her class for classroom responsibilities. Although Tabby had also used similar activities, she had added fast learners leading slow learners, and in certain circumstances slow learners leading fellow slow learners. We were interested to know more on slow learners leading themselves.

Table 14: Classroom Responsibilities

Week 4: January 31 – February 2	Examples from Task Force Discussion
Objectives:	<p data-bbox="659 422 1000 457">Help pupils to be responsible</p> <p data-bbox="659 495 1141 531">Make pupils feel confident in themselves</p> <p data-bbox="659 569 1312 604">Help pupils to accept others as leaders such as the weak</p> <p data-bbox="659 642 1154 678">Make pupils eager to have responsibilities</p> <p data-bbox="659 716 1263 779">Encourage socialization in the classroom especially for the shy</p> <p data-bbox="659 816 938 852">Reduce discipline cases</p>
Classroom Activities:	<p data-bbox="659 890 1256 995">Leadership (changing group leaders, increasing groups to increase number of leaders, fast leading slow learners, slow leading slow learners)</p> <p data-bbox="659 1033 1268 1136">Other responsibilities (group reporters, chalkboard cleaners, material distributors, collectors, classroom cleaners, noise monitors, late comers' reporters)</p>
Remarks:	<p data-bbox="659 1178 1101 1213">Volunteer leaders in various positions</p> <p data-bbox="659 1251 1154 1287">No fear or shyness in giving group reports</p> <p data-bbox="659 1325 1141 1360">Some pupils did not want to go for break</p> <p data-bbox="659 1398 1287 1434">Some pupils wanted to continue learning after classes</p> <p data-bbox="659 1472 1222 1535">More sick reports from parents, i.e. better better communication from parents about pupils</p>

She said, “The moment I gave them some work to do and I discovered that some learners were ahead of others, I grouped those remaining behind, chose an encourager(s) among them to finish the work.” Leadership ranged from chalkboard cleaner to latecomers’ reporter. “It was interesting to note,” Patti said, “that even the younger children were eager to hold a leadership position; ‘I wanted to be a leader,’ a pupil would say.”

According to Patti, more pupils wanted to have leadership positions; as a result those who were leaders did their jobs well to maintain the positions. The teachers had noted that most pupils did their assigned work well and without fear or shyness. Marge had noted that in the senior class most pupils tended to be shy, but when she gave them some responsibilities, some of them developed confidence and were able to do group reports reasonably well. We also noted that in standard 1a and 4b teachers had reported increased sick reports of those pupils with responsibilities in class. Parents were reporting either in writing or word through fellow pupils about the sickness of their children. Obviously, these pupils felt responsible and wanted to be sure the teacher knew why they were absent.

One interesting finding was in standard 6a where responsibilities made the pupils to become reliable in class. Marge had said she had older and some troublesome pupils in her class, but since she started giving them some responsibilities they had changed. They were considerate and less aggressive. The chairperson concurred with her and recalled that he had a similar experience some time back when he gave responsibilities to difficult pupils and discipline cases were reduced. One exit slip written by one of the participants reflected on the importance of giving pupils responsibilities within the classroom: “I have learnt that sharing responsibilities is a very interesting topic. It reduces behavior of isolation, encourages positive socialization in teamwork and appreciation of others and their ideas. In that way self-esteem and confidence are developed.”

At the end of the meeting the chairperson thanked the classroom teachers for their outstanding reports and asked them to continue doing the good job. We agreed to have participatory methods for practice and to be discussed on February 11, 2005, from 10:00 a.m. Then the chairperson closed the meeting with a prayer from Tabby. Members filled out exit slips.

Sixth Task Force Meeting

Our last meeting was again held in the staff room. Nothing had changed, seating arrangement was the same and all members were present. Before the meeting the chairperson was occupied with a few parents who had come to see him so that the meeting started at 11:00 instead of 10:00 a.m. on February 11, 2005. The chairperson opened the meeting with a prayer and welcomed us to the day's meeting. At the beginning of the meeting I again distributed copies of the previous minutes for verification. The chairperson then introduced participatory methods for the day's discussion.

The first report came from Marge, the standard 6a teacher. She had six objectives for her class. Tabby reported seven objectives of which six were similar to Marge. Patti reported eight objectives of which seven were similar to Tabby. But Patti had an objective on evaluation of teacher's methods (Table 15). We wanted her to elaborate what she meant by that. "You know with participatory methods it is easy to know that the method was not working. At one time my pupils failed to do a pair demonstration, and I immediately changed to teacher and pupil demonstration," Patti explained. The idea for participatory methods, we concluded, was to assist the pupils to participate in the lessons fully.

Classroom activities ranged from individual to group work, answering questions to class discussions, and the use of teaching and learning materials (Table 15). Tabby had reported that in her class pupils were able to assist fellow pupils in many ways, such as reading and solving mathematical problems. "I observed that pupils were free to comment on issues concerning their work," she said. Alba concurred with her and recalled his experience when his class formed two groups. The first group said he was too fast; the second one said he was too slow for them. The first group wanted more examples than the second. They resolved the differences by creating two corners "understand" and "did not understand." During class work those who understood the first examples moved to "understand" corner, leaving those who did not understand to continue with other examples.

Role-play was one teaching method the three teachers used. They said role-play did not need much preparation and was easy to use. Tabby reported her classroom experience where she used a hospital scene in which she had doctors and patients. Those who were not doing well in Math were called patients and those who were doing well were called doctors.

Table 15: Participatory Methods

Week 5: February 7 - 11

Examples from Task Force Discussion

Objectives:	Encourage pupils to participate in the lessons
	Help pupils to understand the content fully
	Make pupils more active in the lessons
	Arouse pupils interest
	Help the teacher to assist pupils
	Help the teacher to evaluate his/her methods easily
	Help the teacher to manage his/her class easily
Classroom Activities:	Participatory activities -- writing, reading, listening role playing, modeling field trips giving responses, asking questions applying concepts collecting of teaching and learning materials serving in different positions group, pair work, and demonstration
Remarks:	Pupils participated actively
	Friendly atmosphere in the classroom
	Pupils freely worked with others
	Classroom worked as a team

You see what I did was that I briefed both doctors and patients on their roles. The job of the doctors was to assist the patients and that of the patients was to call for doctors when a problem arose. In the end, the patients had improved greatly in their performance in Math work.

According to Marge, her pupils were eager to participate in most learning activities either in groups or individually, thereby assisting others to learn better. Tabby, on the other hand, had noted in her pupils, fast and slow learners together, that they learned faster when they worked together in a learning activity and they answered questions well. But one exit slip written by one of the participants warned us that participatory methods needed a close check up by teachers in order to ascertain pupils learning. The exit slip said that simply grouping pupils for the sake of participatory methods is damaging. It suggested that participatory learning should accompany teacher participation. One other exit slip written by another participant said, “At first we thought participatory methods were simple but we discovered, in our practice, that it was difficult and we struggled to get it done.”

At the end of our last meeting, we reflected on the whole process. Our reflection questions were, “What process did we develop?” “Did we accomplish it?” “How did we do it?” “Did we meet any problems in developing the process? If so, how did we overcome them?” “What do we intend to do with the process?”

In our reflection we found that members were aware of our task of developing a self-study process to enhance a safe learning environment for our pupils. As we reflected we were able to visualize our final process, a series of meetings such as awareness meeting, a choice of the behaviors, practice, and reflection.

We had started with an awareness meeting where we defined the term ‘safe school’ because most of us had problems in understanding it. It was a relief when we defined it because the definition had minimized the problem of misinterpretation. In the same meeting we completed a self-assessment form and then we discussed our classroom behaviors. It was interesting to note that most of us displayed positive as well as negative behaviors in our classes.

The group was concerned about the negative behaviors that were threats to pupils’ learning, and so we planned to do away with them. We then agreed to identify those behaviors that were crucial to school safety. We identified four among several behaviors. The choice of

four was arrived at because we did not have enough time to accomplish the many behaviors we had identified. We agreed to practice these four behaviors in our classes. Three teachers from different classes participated in the practice. We agreed to reflect on the practices as our final stage and that was done once a week.

Generally speaking, the group liked these meetings because the process encouraged them to participate in the discussions. The first meeting was a learning opportunity to most of us; therefore we spent much time trying to learn each other. The experienced teachers dominated the discussions. But that was checked in subsequent meetings from time to time to give chances to other members.

There were some problems we met in developing the process. We thought the major problem was time. At the time the head teacher accepted me to conduct the study there, he was not aware of an official event to take place at the school. When we realized about the event, we reduce our practice period from three months to one and half months. We also reduced the behaviors to four. Another problem was meeting time. The standard 1a teacher ended her lessons at 11:00 a.m.; the standard 4b teacher ended her lessons at 12:30 p.m.; and the standard 6a teacher ended her lessons at 1:05 p.m. The standard 1a and 6a teachers were continuing their studies; their lesson began at 3:00 p.m. To deal with this problem we allowed flexibility; some times meetings were held in the morning or in the afternoon depending on our free time. Third, while most pupils seemed to understand what was going on in the school, a few chose to be unruly. Fortunately, we met every Friday to report and reflect on the practices so that management, curriculum, and instructional problems were solved in those meetings.

At the end of our reflection the group felt that the process was useful, and they intended to use it in the whole school. They also concluded that the process could be passed on to other schools.

Being the last meeting, the chairperson thanked us all for our cooperation, contributions, and freedom in our expression. He then asked us individually if we had something to say. The teachers thanked the head teacher for asking them to participate in the project in which, they said, they had learnt a lot. And I thanked all the participants and the head teacher for assisting me in this project. The chairperson finally expressed his gratitude on behalf of the school and on his own behalf that his school had been chosen for the study.

He said they had benefited a lot from the project. Finally, he closed the meeting with a prayer. Members wrote exit slips.

Reflection on the Process

Using the data from the interviews that I conducted with the task force members at the end of the study and from my own experiences of the task force meetings, I reflected on the process the task force followed in enhancing a safe learning environment in the classroom. The summary of this reflection is grouped into three categories: (a) teachers' behavioral change, (b) efficient planning for effective teaching, and (c) pupils' behavioral change.

Teachers' Behavioral Change

Behavior change was one decisive element teachers practiced in enhancing safe learning classrooms. I learned from the teachers' reports that behavior change helped them see the pupils and themselves as partners in providing safe environment for learning. They said they no longer labeled pupils 'wrong doers', 'troublesome' and 'noisemakers'. They also said they had changed from developing threatening strategies that allowed them do away with difficult children. Teachers had reported in one of the task force meetings that their negative behaviors toward their pupils were developed to deal with problem children. They had said pupils were 'beaten', 'pinched', 'sent out' of classroom as classroom management strategies. That was done to stop noise, playing in class, laziness or to make pupils work. In spite of difficulties in changing their negative behaviors they got encouraged as they shared their experiences frequently. Tabby had openly admitted to me that she had changed. My understanding by that was that she had stopped her negative behaviors.

The teachers had admitted in their reports that the process had made them see the need to have positive and desirable behavior toward children. They said they had learned in one of our task force meetings that they were providers of children's needs in their classrooms. They learned that pupils needed their love, empathy, respect, recognition and assistance. It required them to be accommodating in order to demonstrate those things. According to Abba, the chairperson of the task force, there were observable changes in the teachers. He said they were punctual for lessons, dressed well, asked pupils to do certain things for them politely and

helped to solve pupils' problems amicably. The teachers themselves had told me that they had stopped beating and scolding the pupils. They said as they demonstrated the positive behaviors many pupils followed their examples. The teachers had reported at the task force meetings several times that the pupils were punctual for classes even during break time.

There was an interesting report from the participating teachers that they were not working in isolation anymore. The behavior of isolation is very common in Malawi nevertheless the teachers had learned to open up for criticisms and to ask for assistance from others. They had said they were now able to tell fellow teachers about a problem, an interesting experience or asked for something or advice if they needed it. That was why, they said, were able to get more interesting styles for praising the children. The teachers had also described the sharing meetings as 'interesting', 'educative', 'motivating', 'important', 'enjoyable', and 'professional' and 'problem solving'. I noticed that the teachers were motivated in these sharing meetings and I thought the issues discussed were critical to their teaching practice. They also commented that sharing of information was an important aspect of their work. They said information was shared among themselves during their meetings and also shared with other teachers when they looked for more information. Teachers had also reported that sharing behavior had extended to their classes. They said in their teaching they became facilitators and pupils shared learning materials, information and working places. Marge had commented that her presentations became learner friendly and her pupils became aware of those developments.

The teachers in the study had learned self-reflection through the self-assessment form in which they evaluated their classroom behaviors. They reported, from the findings of the assessment form, that they had behaved negatively toward their pupils at times. They had said that the more they reflected on their practices the more they discovered strategies for a safer learning environment. They had learned, they said, participatory learning and assigning responsibilities to learners for class management purposes.

Change of attitude toward pupils was another challenging change. The teachers had told me that they brought pre-conceived ideas to class with them about their learners; consequently, they required the pupils to behave in the way they wanted. Tabby was teaching standard 3 in 2004, and in 2005 she taught in standard 4. Most of her learners in 2005 were those who came from standard 3. She had told me that she had developed ill feelings about

some of the pupils who came from standard 3 and used to behave negatively toward them. After sharing sessions she realized that by behaving negatively toward the pupils she was making her classroom unsafe for learning. Patti had said that teachers threatened pupils to command respect and obedience but normally teachers do not tell other teachers about that although the learners know. Those pupils who find the teacher's attitude too much to bear choose to stay away from school or do not participate in learning activities. It was reported in our sharing sessions that teachers had changed they saw each pupil as a unique learner who needed special treatment.

Efficient Planning for Effective Teaching

Dedication to duty proved to be a good prerequisite to efficient planning for effective teaching. I learned that dedication to duty assisted the teachers to do good planning. Abba, whose work was basically that of assisting the teachers in their work, his report in the interviews reflected the teachers' dedication. He repeatedly said that the project involved "planning" and "evaluation" which was in line with the teaching profession ethics because teaching profession requires planning of schemes of work, lesson plans and assessment activities. Abba had told me that the three teachers consulted him especially in lesson planning, use of a teaching strategy and how to go about solving a certain problem. When I interviewed the teachers about their practice, they confirmed that Abba had assisted them so much and he was a source of inspiration. The teachers in the study, worked so hard to find information and teaching materials from different sources. Tabby, for example, was resourceful enough; she consulted teachers including those not involved in the study.

Although the teachers were aware that daily lesson planning was their responsibilities, they had put an extra effort to do good planning. Abba had repeatedly talked about good planning, in-group work; for example, he told me that responsibilities were planned for the pupils in order to have effective group work. On participatory methods, he told me they required good planning too to make sure the pupils knew what they were expected to do.

The teachers had reported that good planning had helped them meet the pupils' potentials through different collaborative learning activities, in which the individual was recognized by everyone in the classroom. As was explained in one of the task force sessions,

the teachers used activities such as group and pair work, class observation, experimentation and demonstration. With that arrangement the teachers believed that the pupils were able to benefit from fellow pupils and from the teachers. They thought the arrangement allowed every pupil, to participate equally. Marge had said she found the arrangement helpful because her pupils had begun to know each other and were free to ask for assistance from others. Tabby had told me that she was excited because of her pupil's reacted positively toward her new teaching methods. The pupils, she said, were now able to ask more questions in class.

Pupils' Behavioral Change

The teachers had reported that pupils' behavior had changed so much during the study. They had said that they observed tolerant behavior in most pupils. They also told me that before the study pupils never tolerated each other. In most cases, they used sarcastic words to respond to each other's mistakes. They laughed when their fellow pupil gave an incorrect answer. Sometimes they physically harassed one another on petty issues. According to Marge, there was no longer segregation in her class because the process required boys and girls to work on the learning activities together. She had told me that her pupils were now disciplined. She also told me that she felt more comfortable than the time when she used threats to control her pupils.

The school had an acute shortage of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials so the little that was available was shared. It was reported that before the study most pupils were reluctant to share materials. But since the commencement of the process teachers had observed pupils sharing materials quite a lot in their classrooms. During class work, competitions among pupils were minimized. They shared the limited textbooks and other teaching materials; they happily shared their forms and tables; and they asked for assistance and also assisted others when the need arose. From what the teachers told me in the interviews, it appeared that girls were looked down upon and were not given responsibilities in their classrooms. If such were the case, I thought girls would find it difficult to accept any responsibilities for fear of being harassed. Teachers had reported that this time things had changed because responsibilities were given to any one, a boy or a girl and nobody would complain.

Pupils had also increased their frequency of going to school. The teachers had reported less absenteeism in their classes. Before this process began, absenteeism was rife among pupils. During the process teachers in standard 1a and 4b had reported less absenteeism. Marge, the standard 6a teacher, at first did not see any change in attendance. She thought that had happened because her class was a senior class and might not have been motivated with praise, which she practiced in the first week. But she reported later in the task force meetings and in the interviews that most pupils came to school in time and were punctual for lessons and other learning activities. Tabby had reported a unique experience where her class did not want to go for break and preferred to continue learning. Patti had reported a similar incident where her class reported for lessons earlier before the end of break time.

Summary

In conclusion, chapter four reported the results of the two aspects of the study, the survey and the self-study process. Teachers at the selected school completed a survey on their perceptions about themselves, their learners, and the school. The findings reported on the survey suggested that the school had some elements of threats, poor relationships, poor leadership, and discrimination among teachers and learners. It was this part of the study, which set the goal of the school on teaching and learning with others.

The second part of chapter four of the study had one major task, that of developing the self-study process. This was to be done by a task force. Shortly after the process started, one of the participants withdrew. And according to the head teacher, the participant had withdrawn because he was not interested in discussing his classroom experiences.

The other teachers had worked hard in developing the process. It was interesting to receive apologies from those who failed to attend some of the meetings. Participation in meetings was pleasing. When some dominated the discussion, I occasionally intervened to give a chance for other teachers to talk. I liked the individual reports too; they were informative, educative and interesting. For fear of receiving false reports, I thought there was need to put a mechanism for classroom observation. In general, all participants favored the self-study process. The administration had said it was pleased with the process because it made his staff work very hard. Actually the head teacher had liked it so much that he

constantly told me that his school would continue using it. The other teachers involved, in the study, liked the process too. From what they told me, they liked the process because they learned a lot from it. It made them work as a team, made decisions together, solved problems together and encouraged them to participate in the discussions. One of them had told me that the process was good and wished all teachers in the school could use it.

Developing a process for the first time was a challenge to us all. Teachers had told me they were used to keeping classroom experiences to themselves. And to successfully develop the process, they had to learn to work together and to change some of their behaviors. It is my belief that this process will go a long way in bringing primary school teachers to a discussion table.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides an overview of the study and a review of the research questions, methodology and findings. It also provides answers to the research questions based on the findings, implications for teacher educators, and recommendations for further research.

Discussion of Findings

The study was carried out in one of the public primary schools in Dedza town in Malawi. It was conducted in order to develop a self-study process for enhancing a safe environment for pupil learning. A safe learning environment is the expectation of most parents, learners and educators and is an important component of a school operation. This study was necessary because (1) literature that documents efforts to creating safe learning environments in the public primary schools in Malawi was hard to find; (2) there was a need to build a culture of safety in the schools in which teachers and learners all feel acknowledged and respected; and (3) there was need for teachers to create safe learning environments in their classrooms as prerequisites to creating schools that were safe for pupil learning.

The study was both descriptive and qualitative designed to discover the perceptions of teachers about themselves and the school and to assess their classroom behaviors. The opinions and experiences sought from the survey (Appendix E) and the self-assessment form (Appendix F) were used to develop and conduct a self-study process in the selected school. Through the survey and task force group, the study investigated the answers to the following research questions:

1. What were teachers' perceptions of school environment in one primary school in Malawi, specifically about maintenance, discipline and safety?
2. What happened when teachers used a self-study process to improve safety in one primary school in Malawi?

Research Question 1

For the first research question, “What were teachers’ perceptions of school environment in one primary school in Malawi, specifically about maintenance, discipline and safety?” A 69- item survey was administered to 28 teachers at the selected public primary school. The teachers were asked to mark their opinion by marking either strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or on other items they marked often, sometimes, rarely, or never to give their opinions about the school maintenance, discipline, and safety. The survey answered the following specific questions:

1. Does a selected public primary school maintain school buildings, grounds, equipment and records to sustain teaching and learning?
2. What were the teachers’ perceptions about behaviors of both teachers and pupils in this public primary school that required disciplinary action?
3. What were the perceptions of teachers about safety in this school?

The survey data were basically used for discussions in the self-study process. In future the survey instrument will be revised so that it could be used as a diagnostic tool to go together with the self-study process.

The survey data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The findings of the teachers’ perceptions suggested that the school environment was good for teaching and learning. The findings indicated that the school buildings were well maintained, building and classroom floors were in good conditions, and school grounds were clean. They also showed that the school equipment was well maintained. The slip charts and other teaching and learning materials were kept in the classrooms. The school records were generally well maintained. For example, the school had admission and attendance registers and progress record books. The relationship in the school was well maintained. The teacher and student relationship was positive, and they both worked together cooperatively. Generally, the teachers liked the school. Most of them reported that they wanted to stay on at the school for sometime. They also reported that they liked the pupils in this school.

However the school had some elements of unsafe school environment. For example, the school had problems in maintaining some of the school facilities such as, classroom walls and doors, children’s latrines, books, school punishment book, and the Malawi teaching syllabi. It had problems in maintaining relationships especially between the head teacher and

staff. The school had also problems with teachers' and students' behaviors, especially where teachers and student discriminate against others, threaten teachers and fellow pupils, destruction of teaching and learning materials, breaking of windows, and stealing other's property.

The state of affairs in this school could be attributed to laxity on the part of the administration resulting from lack of proper coordination between the administration and the teachers to remedy the situation. Such laxity could also be attributed to disorganized leadership resulting from lack of care and action on what happens in the school, or it could also be attributed to pupil confrontations resulting from peer relationships. Research has suggested that where leadership is disorganized, relationships become sour in the school and the staff does not work together to solve their problems. Such a school might have no rules for teachers' and pupils' conduct and perhaps no teaching instruction that allows pupils involvement in school activities (Warner et al., 1999). Additionally, strong negative peer influences in a school have been linked to creating a school culture that is not desirable (Mortimore et al, 1983).

Research Question 2

For the second research question, "What happened when teachers used a self-study process to improve safety in one primary school in Malawi?" A task force comprising six task force members, five teachers and I, was formed in the school to develop and conduct a self-study process. The focus question that assisted us in answering the research question was, "What can we do to achieve a safe environment for pupil learning?" To answer this focus question we held several meetings.

Our first and second meetings, held on November 29, 2004 and January 6, 2005, were specifically for understanding the task and sharing of positive behaviors. In one of the meetings we defined a safe school, bearing in mind that teaching involves an intimate, helping, and democratic relationship between teachers and students and an environment of caring, knowledgeable and skilled teachers who use their gifts on behalf of each child they teach (Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001). Then members of the task force completed a self-assessment form in which they listed their positive behaviors and also gave their opinions on

negative behaviors (Appendix F). After sharing findings from the assessment form we mapped out strategies for creating a safe learning environment.

In our third meeting, held on January 21, 2005, we shared our classroom experiences on praise. We found that more praise improved daily attendance and teacher's recognition of pupils. In our fourth meeting, held on January 28, 2005, we shared our classroom experiences on teaching and learning materials bearing in mind that activities, with appropriate use of its tools, provide experiences, which are important for subsequent action (Brown, et al., 1989). Indeed we found that the use of teaching and learning materials increased pupils' participation in their class work.

In our fifth meeting, held on February 4, 2005, we shared our classroom experiences on classroom responsibilities. We found that delegating responsibilities to pupils made them have confidence in themselves and exemplary in their behaviors. An interesting finding was that teachers were eager to delegate responsibilities to pupils. In our sixth meeting, held on February 11, 2005, we shared our classroom experiences on participatory methods. We found that participatory methods made learners eager to take part in learning activities; teachers were also able to give more assistance to pupils in the learning process.

The School-wide, Self-Study Process

A four-step self-study process was developed during the study in the selected school. The steps of the process are (1) building awareness and community, (2) developing a group focus, (3) implementing the group focus, and (4) reflection on the practice.

Building awareness and community. Awareness could be defined as new knowledge obtained because someone made us recognize something in a different way or a realization of a familiar thing that becomes important to us for some reason. One example of this awareness was Tabby's reaction in one of the sessions when she said, "I must admit that I saw myself punishing innocent pupils in my class." She regretted her classroom behavior that made her pupils feel threatened. Her reaction was probably a sign that she had learnt something. Teacher community would be defined as a resource, a resource because teacher community could be an environment that is friendly, responsive to development, and responsive to improvement in the teaching (Little, 2003). Marge felt that her teacher community was indeed a resource; "The meetings were conducted in a professional manner and provided us with a

learning atmosphere so that everybody was free to participate.” In a good teacher community, members have an on-going opportunity to reflect on and analyze their teaching as well as strategies that help them plan, assess, and revise their individual and collaborative efforts (Schaps and Lewis, 1999; Supovitz and Christman, 2005). Zellermayer and Margolin (2005) believed that a teacher community is a unique entity; the community has a way of expressing its practice and its members have common interest and goals.

Building awareness was done through a self-assessment form where we as members identified our classroom behaviors. After sharing our classroom behaviors, we realized that we did certain things in our classrooms but we were not aware of their implications to our pupils. As a matter of fact, we demonstrated a number of negative behaviors in our classrooms to make ourselves comfortable. Patti recalled, “Pupils cannot do certain things in class for fear of being sent out, pitched, beaten or made stupid in front of the class.” We also realized, during our discussions, that our behaviors were important in the learning of our children. So we decided to have an interest in our classroom behaviors to avoid a repeat of our negative behaviors. We had agreed that a good classroom behavior was helpful in building confidence and authority in teachers (Independent Project Trust, 1999).

Building community was done through defining the term *safe school*. To begin with, we had awakening questions such as the one Josie asked, “What does safe school mean?” Alba’s reply to Josie’s question was, “We might have, all of us, the same problem in understanding it.” We discussed the question to make sure that we had a common understanding.

We arrived at the definition of the term through a process of consensus. When we realized that we had a problem in understanding safe school, we opted for brainstorming its characteristics and then generated its meaning from the characteristics. We had identified five characteristics (table 8). From the five characteristics we found eight different meanings (table 9); each of the meanings was related to one of the characteristics in table 8. Finally we summarized our eight meanings into one general meaning.

As we brainstormed the characteristics we also collected information about a safe school and the information helped us solve the problem of misinterpretation. Thus defining the term gave us a common language. In the process of defining safe school, we became aware of the importance of a safe learning environment to the pupils, the teachers and the

school as a whole. During the discussion we were able to share our feelings, associate with each other and build trust for each other. Trust was important for our full participation in the study because there was need for us to accept others' views as worthwhile for consideration. More importantly, defining safe school provided us with a sense of owning the meaning.

Building awareness and community had assisted us to reduce our isolation and to start sharing our experiences and perceptions in an effort to improve our teaching. As we shared the curriculum, instruction, and classroom management problems, we got the benefit of the members of our community (Little, 2003). We promoted the best practices and abandoned the weak ones. We did that to live up to our agreements and to ideas offered by our community. Our community was a kind of stimulant and we fought to show our solidarity. As we participated in the community's activities we gained experience that would assist us in our teaching. According to French, Hull and Dodds (1957) when we take part in activities of a particular community, we become helpful to the community that we join because we establish roots and interest as we participate.

Sharing emerged as an interest when we brainstormed. I prepared a self-assessment form (Appendix C), in one of the sessions in this step. The first part of the form asked members to list positive behaviors. These were behaviors that made the pupils feel good in the classroom. The second part asked them to give their opinions on the negative behaviors. These were behaviors that made the pupils feel fearful and threatened in the classroom. After completing the assessment form, we shared the findings.

Sharing helped us to open up and talk about our classroom behaviors freely. Most teachers in Malawi work in isolation and have difficulty in sharing their experiences with others. There was a possibility that Josie withdrew from the study because he was not interested in sharing his classroom experiences with others. But sharing has the power to perpetuate continuous renewal and creative experience (Arhar et al., 2001). During sharing we learned positive behaviors related to our classroom situations. After that we were able to polished up our own behaviors, seeing how others had behaved in similar situations. Since sharing sessions were member friendly, we were encouraged to give our views regardless of our gender, teaching class, or educational qualification.

Because time was a limiting factor, we could not exhaust everything on teacher behavior. The time factor was expressed as a concern in other discussions on classroom

practices (Little, 2003). We had also found that discussions took a lot of time and we had to concentrate on issues related to classroom behaviors. For that reason I introduced exit slips to try to elicit some of the issues that were not said in the meeting. Exit slips were short in nature but conveyed important messages

To be able to write the exit slips, I distributed blank pieces of paper at the end of the meeting. Members were asked to write their experiences, observations and feelings about the discussion. The exit slips were then given to me.

Exit slips proved to be useful to me in getting additional information from members. It was like perpetuating our talk, as the actual talk was short (Little, 2003). Members who felt dominated found exit slips a rare opportunity where they could express themselves without hesitation. One teacher's exit slip talked about how the study was going to assist the school to develop into a model school. While another exit slip talked about the teacher behaviors that had been shared and referred to them as inadequate as compared to the many positive behaviors teachers display in their classrooms. Exit slips also assisted members to express their feelings whether or not they understood what was shared. In some cases exit slips elaborated a condensed idea from the meeting.

Developing a group focus. A focus would be defined as a clear idea of the goals/objectives to be accomplished. A goal is developed with a purpose of making things better. Our first task as a newly formed task force was to identify the security problems that contributed to the unsafe learning environment (Independent Project Trust, 1999). We found in one of the sessions in step 1 that we had behaviors that contributed to unsafe learning environments. We were concerned about that and we wished to reduce those behaviors in our classrooms.

In order to develop the focus, we took the list of teachers' behaviors from step 1, drew it on the chalkboard for everyone to be able to see; then we discussed each behavior separately to give them an equal opportunity to voice their views. Through teacher conversation a behavior that was crucial to school safety was picked for practice. A total of four teacher behaviors were selected. We selected only four behaviors to make the task reasonable to be completed.

The original list of behaviors was long. "I feel that the behaviors selected are few but in the interest of time that is enough," Alba observed. Of course, we wanted something we

could accomplish within the given time; otherwise, we could not be able to control our own focus. The group focus also raised the probability that it could become ours, which we would try to solve by ourselves. There was the possibility of hesitation in doing our work had the focus been imposed on us.

In our conversation about focus, like sharing in step 1, we were encouraged to give our views freely and had an opportunity to choose a focus of our choice. As we conversed a number of ideas came up for each behavior, which gave us a better choice. It was encouraging to note that during our conversation we worked as a team, that is, we accepted a behavior after a thorough discussion and a general agreement.

Because time was a factor, I asked members to write exit slips just as I did in step 1. I distributed pieces of paper to the members to write their comments, feelings and observation about the focus. The exit slips were given to me.

The exit slips served as self-reflection on our focus. Most exit slips had said that step 2 was crucial to our process because that was where we had set up our goal. I thought the exit slips assisted me to know how much the members had understood the task. The exit slips assisted us, as a group, in our planning of the next step as one exit slip explained, “My understanding is that once a behavior has been identified it would continue to be practiced even after the project is over.” Indeed our planning involved identifying strategies that would perpetuate the practice even after the study was over. That would benefit other members of staff who did not participate in the study.

Implementing the group focus. Implementation refers to an effort to achieve objectives into the best possible ways. In our implementation we agreed to practice the four behaviors for five weeks. The five-week period was dictated by time because the selected school was expecting a national event at the time. We had planned to stop our exercise in the 6th week of the first term because student teachers from one of the teacher training colleges were arriving in the 7th week for their teaching practice. To implement the behaviors, as a group, we identified two strategies. First, we agreed to increase the rate of positive behaviors and second, to reduce or stop, completely, the negative behaviors. Finally an instrument (tables 12 – 15) was developed to assist the recording of information or experiences sought from different classroom practices.

Implementation of behaviors in this way helped us promote safe learning environment for pupils (Independent Project Trust, 1999). As we increased positive behaviors and reduced the negative ones we were able to promote practices, such as praise, and abandon practices, such as discrimination of pupils. The practice for positive behaviors gave confidence to teachers to begin to like their pupils equally. During implementation the group supported each other by providing materials, comments, and advice for improvement. The support assisted participating teachers to solve some management, curriculum, and instructional problems. The classroom teachers had told the group that the implementation had gone on well. They said they were able to intensify their efforts where they did not do well. They also said they took advice from group members and implemented what was agreed in the meetings. An interesting finding was that the participating teachers worked as a team, thereby supporting and encouraging each other in their practice and during discussions.

Sharing emerged again as an important part of the process as was the case in step 1. At the end of each week we met to share classroom experiences. We used the chalkboard to record all contributions made by participating teachers. And each contribution was discussed thoroughly. For example, in one of the sessions the teachers had expressed their confidence in handling their classes. An interesting finding was that some teachers had observed their pupils assisting each other in their own learning, while others observed pupils taking advantage of the situation. Marge reported, "My problem is that since I started reducing the negative behaviors in my class, I have noted that some pupils are taking advantage of that and are causing problems."

The participating teachers were open. Openness was crucial in this step to get the best from them as we relied on their experiences. There was neither fear nor shyness; nor did they feel offended as they narrated their experiences and we commented or gave advice on any of the experiences discussed. Sharing of experiences in this step was possible because the classroom teachers had trust in the group. Because of the trust they were able to confide their classroom experiences to the group.

As in other steps, I asked members to write exit slips. I distributed pieces of paper to the members to write their comments, feelings, and observation about their experiences in this step. They wrote the exit slips and handed them over to me.

The exit slips assisted me in knowing what transpired in this step and provided insight into some interactions of the group that I would not have known otherwise. Some exit slips had stated that the implementation of the focus was crucial to the process because it was where we had to put our focus in practice. Yet some exit slips had said the implementation of the focus was important because they were able to assess their work, themselves, and fellow members especially those who were unwilling to assist. The exit slips were also used for self-critiquing, critiquing others, and to warn the organizers to be careful with the behavior of some members.

Reflecting on the practice. Reflection is referred to as a process of looking back on practices with an idea of making improvements. Our reflection was a matter of deducing our own attitudes from scrutinizing situations that provided us with external clues to our internal states (Bem, 1967). Our reflection was an ongoing practice in all the steps.

We reflected our classroom behaviors through a self-assessment form (Appendix F) in step 1. We found that our classroom behaviors were a combination of behaviors that were good for pupil learning and behaviors that were threats to pupil learning. The reflection exercise changed the participating teachers' thinking. They started improving their behaviors, planned their lessons well, marking pupils work, collaborating and sharing their classroom experiences with other teachers (Independent Project Trust, 1999). The participating teachers, in a way, introduced democratic classroom learning activities. In step 3, the participating teachers reflected daily in their classroom practices and weekly in their weekly meetings. In step 4 we reflected on the whole process through teacher conversation. During reflection we asked ourselves such questions as: "What was our task? Were we able to accomplish it? How did we do it? What process did we follow? Did we meet any problems? If yes, how did we overcome them? What do we intend to do with the process?"

Reflection assisted in making informed decisions especially in planning, assessing, and revising our individual and collaborative efforts about our practice (Supovitz and Christman, 2005). As we reflected, we were able to realize that there were certain practices that were not working and needed us to go back to the drawing board. There were instances when the group revisited its plans because what it planned would not work. There were also instances when classroom teachers changed their overt behaviors after group discussion or

through self-reflection. The teachers then were able to adjust themselves after individual and group reflection.

In our last meeting we had an agenda specifically for reflecting on the process, and teacher conversation emerged as a means of discussion. During the conversation each member was free to express his or her feelings about each step in the process. We wound up with a general agreement that the process was usable and members could continue using it.

During conversation we were encouraged to give our views regardless of our role in the study. An interesting finding was that most views expressed were in favor of the process. In our discussions we were able to learn problems met by the individual classroom teachers and how they overcame them. As they talked, we managed to point out where they went wrong, and they were able to accept our advice. Group members did not have difficulty in giving the advice because we worked as one person and we trusted each other. A case was reported in one of the sessions in step 3 where a classroom teacher felt bad when her pupils took advantage of a change in her behavior. She brought her worries to the attention of the group and from our combined effort she was able to regain her confidence.

In our last meeting, the participating teachers wanted to comment more on the whole process. Since there was not much time to discuss every issue, I asked members to write exit slips just as I did in other steps. I distributed pieces of paper to the members to write their comments and feelings about the process. The exit slips were handed over to me. These exit slips continued to reflect on the process though a few reflected on general issues. Most of them said that reflection on the process was one of the most important steps in the process because it was like refining the process. They said they were able to know the successes and failures of the process. The exit slips assisted me to know how much effort members had put in the process, and they were good monitoring mechanisms.

Summary of Findings

Finally, given our primary interest in enhancing a safe learning environment for pupil learning, the findings of the survey at the selected public primary school suggested that there was a need to have a democratic school management because no management plan for school safety can succeed without a culture of democracy (Independent Project Trust, 1999). A democratic environment includes good communication and decision-making systems, and a

sense of responsibility among the staff, learners and parents. Independent Project Trust argued that in a school where learners feel safe, the learners oftentimes stress the caring nature of the school.

This study had sought to enhance a safe learning environment on a small scale, the classroom, through a task force group. Although the observations of the first task force meeting had indicated that it was a difficult task for teachers to change from unsafe to safe learning classrooms, gradually the three participating teachers gained confidence and began using more of problem identification, self-reflection, classroom practice, and sharing. According to participating teachers, reflection on their behaviors and the sharing of their classroom experiences were particularly important. An interesting finding was that after the teachers had developed and used the process, they experienced fewer discipline problems in their classes. They also found that they were not mostly at the front of the classroom telling pupils the content but the pupils were more engaged in the learning. This was what Rothenberg et al. (1998) described as a process that rewards teachers because they think more about their learners and their teaching. We could only speculate that pedagogic change at this juncture occurred in response to trying to create a safe learning classroom.

There were lots of changes in this study. First and foremost, was the change in teaching approaches, which occurred slowly and with difficulty. Although the teachers had time and again talked about the advantages of the process, they also talked about the amount of work required to achieve a safe learning environment. Having developed and used the process, it would seem it was helpful for teachers to understand the human basic needs. The understanding of the basic needs would redirect the expectations of both teachers and pupils to more positive grounds. They would be less charged with myths and beliefs about past performances. Research has suggested that teachers often appear to believe that teaching is best done in a certain set of ways but such assumptions are not positive (Rothenberg et al., 1998).

Implications and Recommendations

The descriptive and qualitative study captured teachers' experiences at one public primary school in Malawi. The study suggested that teachers were surrounded by (1) poor

school maintenance, (2) poor relationships in the school, (3) unsafe teaching conditions, and (4) negative classroom behaviors. These conditions contradict the desire to have a safe learning environment for pupils and pose a number of challenges. The final part of this section puts forward a set of possible implications for educators and recommendations for future research.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

Although the self-study process was school based, its implications are diverse for teaching and learning in the public primary schools in Malawi. There are some things in primary education, which are said but probably not done as expected. For example the 1991 national primary education objectives addressed issues such as developing the spirit of leadership, cooperation, moral values, developing decision-making skills and scientific approaches and attitudes to problem-solving in the learners (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1991). According to the participating teachers in the study, the process they developed in this one school indicated strategies and techniques that any school could follow to make its teaching and learning atmosphere learner friendly and safe. The teachers were optimistic that the process could be a potential tool for enhancing teaching and learning in primary schools. They saw that the self-study process allowed them to put theory into practice.

One of the essential features the participating teachers reported about the process was that they were able to change their attitudes toward their learners and their teaching. Generally, positive teacher behaviors such as good lesson preparation and presentation, warmth, patience and confidence lead to safe schools (IPT, 1999). Negative teacher behaviors, on the other hand, could contribute to unsafe schools. The participating teachers had also reported that before the self-study process they regarded their learners as people who could not assist in the process of teaching and learning. But after discussing the role of learners in teaching and learning in our task force meetings, teachers recognized the learners and were able to look at them as partners in the teaching and learning process. The teachers in the process also reported that they were not punctual for school activities. They turned up late for first lessons in the morning, after break times and at any activity that they planned for learners. But the self-study process had reminded them that punctuality was their obligation to

the learners, that is, if they turned up late the learners were losing a lot in terms of time to learn. The teachers had commented that in the past sharing of ideas about their classroom experiences was detested by many. Most of them feared they would be laughed at for showing their ignorance. But the self-study process had showed them that teaching and learning requires sharing of ideas and teaching and learning materials with other teachers. The participating teachers also reported that before the introduction of the self-study process they planned in a slapdash fashion, did not plan on a daily basis, and did not make any effort to plan well. Now that they were exposed to the self-study process, their planning was meant to meet the learners' potentials through collaborative learning activities.

The teachers in the process reported about involvement of learners in school activities. They said learners were minimally involved in school activities because they could not trust and entrust their responsibilities to them. But the self-study process helped them to begin to involve learners in school activities such in administration, communication, character building, and academic work, and in the upkeep of the school. The teachers also reported that cordial relationships and safe classrooms freed the learners. The learners seemed to participate in school activities more. The learners appeared eager to lead others and to be respectful to their teachers, their fellow learners, and the school facilities in general.

Good school leadership brings together its staff to build a school-wide view of teaching and learning. The head teacher and the experienced teachers in this primary school played an important role in changing the teaching and learning environment. The participating teachers reported that before the self-study process it was difficult for them to assist each other in the classrooms or in other school functions. They said they liked observing and criticizing each other when one was teaching or finding problems in the work she or he was doing. They liked basking in the sun or sitting at the back of the classroom doing their own work and not concerned with what was going on in the classroom. The self-study process had helped them to see the importance of assisting fellow teachers in class work, extra-curriculum activities, and in manual work. The teachers attributed the leadership of the head teacher as instrumental in bringing them together to discuss their teaching.

According to the participating teachers, the school-wide, self-study process seemed to be an important tool for teaching and learning in the primary schools in Malawi. The teachers reported that the process addressed pertinent issues concerning safety in their school and

made the teaching and learning atmosphere learner friendly. They said it could be a good idea to disseminate the process to other teachers and schools so that they too could benefit from it.

Implications for Educators

The participating teachers had reported that the self-study process could be a potential tool for putting theory into practice. The current primary teacher-training curriculum in Malawi demands a content that has more theories of teaching and leaves out the school safety praxis. Without proper primary teacher training the efforts of school-based safety programs would be futile. According to Mirembe (2001), primary teacher training colleges need to include courses in their curriculum that explore ways in which safe learning environment for pupils could be addressed. Colleges emphasize the responsibilities of teachers in school but do not include the responsibilities that promote safety. Teachers are part of the school society, and as such they could carry out responsibilities that encourage safety in the school. It is of great importance that teachers see themselves as change agents in their schools to be able to enhance safe learning environments in the schools (Department of Education, 2001).

The teachers also reported that the self-study process helped them to begin to involve learners in school activities as partners in teaching and learning. The primary teacher training colleges in Malawi focus on the needs of teachers and have little focus on the needs of the children the teachers are going to teach. It is imperative to offer children opportunity to contribute to the school to create a strong sense of community in the school and to engage the child in meaningful learning (Schaps and Lewis, 1999). The colleges could make an effort to have programs that prepare the student teachers with the knowledge and skills on children participation in their learning. According to Mlamleli et al. (2000), youth leadership shapes pupils' beliefs and attitudes, which can play a very effective role in reducing aggressive behaviors in schools. Many school-based safety programs these days, in other countries, focus on involving young people because studies have shown that promoting positive behaviors and building positive relationships through youth participation and leadership is effective in promoting the desired changes (Development and Training Services Consortium, 2003).

The teachers in the study had indicated that the self-study process had made them aware of the things that make the learners unsafe in the classrooms. Primary teacher training colleges in Malawi do not have in-service programs for head teachers and other experienced

teachers who are instrumental in the safety of the schools. The survey findings in this study have suggested that the selected public primary school had a problem of poor relationship and poor leadership. There was a culture of minimum communication and community participation. But nurturing the culture of communication and participation in schools opens up channels of dialogue between administrators and teachers, teachers and pupils, teachers and parents thereby developing mutual respect (Department of Education, 2001). It is not enough to sit back and do nothing about it. Many schools have already suffered. It only requires the colleges to create opportunities for teachers to share their experiences and solve problems of school safety together.

The teachers also reported that the self-study process had helped them see the importance of sharing and reflecting in their teaching practice. The primary teacher training colleges in Malawi do not have courses in reflective action in which teaching advances because of continuous reflection. The world is changing. The world most experienced teachers grew up is different from today's world in which they teach (Arhar et al., 2001). In the new world critical reflection is important because it produces changes and new reflections on practices. It is essential for teacher educators to be aware of this scenario and be able to adapt to the new world that we are living in and practice our teaching. There is need to look beyond the surface of our practice with respect to larger social issues to see whose needs were not addressed (Arhar et al., 2001).

Suggestions for Future Research

When the survey was conducted a number of positive and negative classroom behaviors were found, and teachers set up goals based on those findings. There is need to have a follow-up study of the school to see if there is a continued use of the process as well as progress on the goals established for the school. There is also a need to have further research to see whether other teachers in the school have begun using the self-study process and why. Such a study could take the form of classroom observations and interviews of the teachers in the study.

Teacher behaviors such as use of praise, teaching and learning materials, assigning classroom responsibilities to pupils and participatory methods were reported in the study to have an impact in enhancing a safe learning environment. Because the study was done in one

primary school, there might be some similarities and differences when the study could be replicated in more than one school and in different localities. Future studies could focus on the replication of the study in other schools in order to examine the process in different school contexts. Such replication can help further understanding and refine the self-study process for addressing school safety. Further refinement of the survey instrument on school safety could prove especially useful. For example, developing of the parts of the survey strategy that would reveal the perceptions of students, parents, community members and the head teacher could add to the comprehensiveness of the self-study process.

Teacher behaviors such as participatory methods, when properly administered are believed to be a practical means of influencing pupils' motivation to learning (Hancock, 2002). The participating teachers, who used such practices as participatory learning, praise, and assigning of class responsibilities, reported that the learners were interested in the lessons and were able to participate fully in the lessons. Future research on each practice could examine the impact of the practice used on learning especially now when Malawi is developing a new curriculum approach, the outcomes-based approach. The study could be a survey to gain broad-based information on the practicability of the practices followed by case studies of the schools that were using the practices and how their use may influence perceptions of school safety.

There is ample evidence related to gender-based violence. Others have even suggested working with boys and girls together or separately, depending on the social context, to find approaches that may reshape the construction of gender roles (Development and Training Services Consortium, 2003). In the survey, teachers reported that boys and girls harass each other equally. Since there were limited studies available in Malawi that documented unsafe, hostile school environments for boys and girls in school settings, more studies are needed on gender-based violence affecting especially girls in and around the school and on their way to and from school.

Discrimination against other people is a constitutional issue (Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation, 1995). According to the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation no person shall discriminate against another person based on sex, race, religion, disability, ethnic group or language. But in the survey teachers reported that pupils of one religion discriminated against pupils of other religions, and some teachers discriminated against other

teachers based on ethnic groups. No specific religion or ethnic group was mentioned in the study. Further research is needed to establish what religions or ethnic groups are discriminated against in Malawi schools.

This study focused on teacher involvement and it examined the role of teachers and school leadership in providing school safety. Further research could involve parents, learners and the community in providing school safety.

The study also examined the role of teachers and school leadership in providing school safety. The participating teachers in the study had reported that the head teacher's participation was instrumental in the study. There is need for further research to establish the role of administrators in the self-study process. On the other hand, the findings reported in the survey suggested that the school had a number of problems. Some of these problems were attributed to school leadership. There is need for further research to examine the role of the self-study process in promoting school leadership by classroom teachers and head teachers.

In the study the head teacher had reported that one member of the task force had withdrawn from the study on the basis that he was not interested to discuss his classroom experiences with other teachers. The member could represent other teachers who were in doubt about the self-study process. There is need for further research to examine the opinions of teachers in the school who had doubts about the self-study process. The study could use a survey and individual interviews of teachers with doubts about the self-study process in the school.

The survey instrument used in this study was locally developed specifically for this study in this public primary school. There is need for further research to administer the instrument nation wide to establish the reliability and validity of the instrument for further use.

Summary

This study was carried out in a single school in Malawi with a small group of teachers and their head teacher, who implemented a self-study process to enhance school safety. By focusing on what they could do to create a safe learning environment in their own classrooms, these teachers met over a period of six weeks to discuss their teaching and reflect on how their

pupils felt about being in their classrooms. They attempted to increase the positive teacher behaviors they identified as part of their practice and to decrease the negative behaviors. Through focused lesson planning and application of selected strategies, these teachers reported that during the time of the study that pupils participated more actively in classroom activities, that they were more punctual, and that absenteeism was reduced. This self-study process was one the teachers believed could be implemented easily in other schools as an approach to solving school problems.

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Appendix A

SAFE SCHOOLS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING: DEVELOPING A SCHOOL-WIDE, SELF-STUDY PROCESS

Research Conducted by:

Hasten Mjoni Mwale
St. Joseph's Teachers' College
P. O. Box 11
Dedza

February 5, 2004

- TO: The Principal Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Private Bag 328, Capital City, Lilongwe 3
- CC: The Division Manager, Central West Division, P. O. Box 98, Lilongwe
- CC: The District Education Manager, Dedza District Education Office, P. O. Box 131, Dedza
- CC: The Coordinating Primary Education Advisor, Dedza Education Office, P. O. Box 131, Dedza

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO INVOLVE TEACHERS AT ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN DEDZA TOWN

I am writing to request for your permission to involve teachers at one of the Government Primary Schools in Dedza town, in a research project that I am conducting for my dissertation. The research project is one of the requirements in writing my dissertation in fulfillment of my Doctoral Degree.

The topic for my study is "Safe Schools for Teaching and Learning: Developing a school-wide, self-study process". Its purpose is to develop a process by which schools would enhance safe learning environments for their pupils. Virginia Polytechnic and State University of the United States where I am currently studying have endorsed the research.

I understand that in collecting data about safety in the school, I will be collecting much of the data about things common in an unsafe school, which are limited, subjective and highly sensitive in nature. The process, once developed, will give teachers an opportunity to discuss how to enhance safe learning environment to improve the situation at their school. In this regard, I assure you that the information provided would be kept confidential. In fact, no individual data linking names or other identifying information will be reported.

I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration in this important undertaking.

Yours faithfully,
Hasten Mjoni Mwale

Appendix B

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology,
Private Bag 328,
Lilongwe 3.

12th March 2004

Dear Mr. Mwale,

I would like to acknowledge receipt of your letter, requesting permission from the Ministry to allow you involve teachers in Dedza for your research project.

I am pleased to inform you that request has been granted.

However, it is a requirement that you submit to this office the dates that you wish to use the teachers so that those dates do not conflict with their work and also the following: -

- a) Your research proposal
- b) Data analysis techniques you will use
- c) Data collection tools/instruments
- d) Procedure to be use for data collection
- e) If any, CV's of your collaborators in the research, then,
- f) The thesis at the end of the process

I wish you all the success.

Dr. J. B. Kuthemba Mwale

For: **SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

Appendix C

From: Hasten Mjoni Mwale
St. Joseph's Teachers' College
P. O. Box 11
Dedza

May 11, 2004

TO: The Principal Secretary
Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Private Bag 328
Capital City, Lilongwe 3

Dear Sir,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated March 12, 2004 in which you asked me to send you the schedule for my research. Attached are:

- a) The proposed program for my meetings
- b) Research proposal
- c) Data analysis techniques to be used
- d) Data collection procedure and
- e) Data collection instrument

Thank you for accepting my request.

Yours faithfully,

H. Mjoni Mwale

Appendix D

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants in Research/ Project involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Safe Schools for Teaching and Learning: Developing a School-wide, self-school Process

Investigator(s): Hasten Mjoni Mwale and Dr. Josiah Tlou

Purpose of this Research /Project

The purpose of this study is to developing a school-wide, self-school process in one public primary school in Malawi in order to be able to enhance a safe learning environment.

II Procedures

Data will be collected in two ways. Data about school conditions, behaviors that are common in school and teachers' feelings about the safety of their school, will be collected through the use of a survey questionnaire.

Data that will be used to develop a self-study process will be collected from a series of meetings.

There will be a meeting with the head teacher, lasting 30 minutes, to discuss the possibility of developing a self-study process for the school. During the meeting, a chairperson and a committee will be identified among the members of staff. The committee will assist the researcher in developing the self-study process.

There will be a meeting with the staff; during the meeting the researcher will administer the survey, which the participants will complete in 30 minutes.

There will be three meetings with the committee: to discuss data that the researcher analyzed from the survey, in preparation for the development of the self-study process; to create objectives for self-study program and discuss the framework the researcher developed; and there will be a follow up meeting of members of the committee to discuss results of a study they will conduct using the self-study process and using an evaluation form to evaluate each of the steps of the process. In the study, the researcher will be an observer. Each of the meetings will take an hour and be spaced in monthly intervals.

III. Risks

There are no expected risks related to participation in this study.

IV. Benefits

There are no specific benefits for you related to participation in the study. No promise or guarantee of benefits will be made to encourage your participation. The product of the study will assist your school to assess the status of safety in order to be able to eliminate or reduce violence and vandalism.

V. Anonymity and Confidentiality

You will not write your name on the questionnaire. Although the product of this study will be shared with other schools in the long run, neither your names nor any other identifier will be associated with any information you supply.

VI. Compensation

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. You simply have to inform the researcher about your decision or Dr. Duncan Nyirenda.

VIII. Approval of Research

This research project has been approved, as is required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Department of Teaching and Learning.

November 10, 2003

IRB Approval Date

Approval Expiration Date

IX. Participant’s Responsibility

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I will complete the survey and I will be a member of the committee developing the self-study process.

X. Participant’s Permission

I have read and understand the Informed Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

Signature

Date

Witness (optional exceptional for certain classes of subjects)

Date

Hasten Mjoni Mwale

October 6, 2003

Researcher

Date

Should I have questions about this research project, I may contact:

Hasten Mjoni Mwale, 01223083, hmjonimw@vt.edu

Dr. Duncan Nyirenda, 01536300, mie@malawi.net

Dr. Mary Alice Barksdale

01-540-2313166, mab@vt.edu

Departmental Reviewer/Department Head

Telephone/e-mail

Daisy Steward, 0338

01-540-2315347, daisys@vt.edu

Dr. David Moore

01-540-2314991, moore@vt.edu

Chair, IRB

Telephone/e-mail

Office of Research Compliance

Research and Graduate Studies

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, VA, 29061, USA,

Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of signed Informed Consent.

Appendix E
Safe Schools for Teaching and Learning:
Developing a School-wide, Self-study Process



Questionnaire

Instructions:

- Do not put your name on your survey.
- This survey is designed for primary school teachers to report about factors that contribute to school safety.
- The questionnaire has three sections; make sure that all the sections are answered.
- Please read the instructions in each section carefully and take time to answer each question.
- Be assured that answers will be kept confidential.
- You have no obligation to answer the questionnaire.

Section A:

In this section you are asked to evaluate the conditions of the school following the list of items below.

School Buildings: For each question, circle the number that applies to your answer on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Agree (A), 4 = Strongly Agree (SA)

	SD	D	A	SA
1. School buildings are maintained regularly	1	2	3	4
2. The classroom floors are in good condition (not damaged or dirty)	1	2	3	4
3. Classroom walls are clean	1	2	3	4
4. Classroom windows are intact	1	2	3	4
5. Classroom doors are intact	1	2	3	4
6. Children use their latrines properly	1	2	3	4
7. The school grounds are kept clean	1	2	3	4

School equipment

8. Teachers' books are in good condition (clean, not torn or written in)	1	2	3	4
9. Children's books are in good condition	1	2	3	4
10. Charts are displayed in the classrooms	1	2	3	4
11. Teaching and learning materials, designed to support learning are kept in the classrooms	1	2	3	4

Relationships

12. Teacher/pupil ratio supports maximum learning	1	2	3	4
13. Teacher/pupil relationships are positive	1	2	3	4
14. Head teacher/staff relationships are positive	1	2	3	4
15. School/community relationships are positive	1	2	3	4

School management: You are asked the availability of school records that are in use. For each question, circle the number that applies to your answer on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Agree (A), 4 = Strongly Agree (SA).

	SD	D	A	SA
16. The school has admission register	1	2	3	4
17. The school has daily attendance registers	1	2	3	4
18. The school has staff minute book	1	2	3	4
19. The school has pupils progress records	1	2	3	4
20. The school has daily routine programs	1	2	3	4
21. The school has a visitors book and all visitors must sign	1	2	3	4
22. The school has punishment book	1	2	3	4
23. Teachers have copies of Malawi syllabi	1	2	3	4
24. Teachers keep schemes and records of work	1	2	3	4
25. Teachers write daily lesson plans	1	2	3	4
26. Teachers have individual class timetables	1	2	3	4
27. Teachers have class stock book	1	2	3	4
28. The school has adequate numbers of qualified teachers	1	2	3	4
29. The Head teacher delegates duties	1	2	3	4
30. Students are involved in the running of the school	1	2	3	4

Section B

In this section you are reporting behaviors that are common in the school among teachers and students. For each question, circle the number that applies to your answer on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 = Often, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Rarely, 4 = Never

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Often
31. Students get into fights	1	2	3	4
32. Students threaten other students	1	2	3	4
33. Students threaten teachers	1	2	3	4
34. Teachers threaten students	1	2	3	4
35. Students call other students bad names	1	2	3	4
36. Teachers call students bad names	1	2	3	4

37. Students tease other students	1	2	3	4
38. Teachers tease students	1	2	3	4
39. Students break windows	1	2	3	4
40. Students mark classroom walls	1	2	3	4
41. Students mark toilet walls	1	2	3	4
42. Students mark desks	1	2	3	4
43. Students remove teaching and learning materials from the classroom	1	2	3	4
44. Students steal others property	1	2	3	4
45. Students steal school property	1	2	3	4
46. Teachers steal school property	1	2	3	4
47. Students destroy school property	1	2	3	4
48. Groups of students discriminate against other students based on religion	1	2	3	4
49. Groups of students discriminate against other students based on ethnic group	1	2	3	4
50. Teachers discriminate against other teachers based on ethnic group	1	2	3	4
51. Boys harass girls	1	2	3	4
52. Girls harass boys	1	2	3	4
53. In group work, girls and boys form separate groups	1	2	3	4
54. Teachers work with other teachers cooperatively	1	2	3	4
55. Students work with teachers cooperatively	1	2	3	4
56. Students work with other students cooperatively	1	2	3	4
57. Teachers have knowledge of students who smoke marijuana	1	2	3	4

Appendix F

Safe Classroom Learning Environment Self-Assessment Form

Instructions:

- Answer both Part I and II
- Part I asks you to write the things you do in your classroom that make children feel safe
- Part II asks you to indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree with the statement given and why.

Part I

Things I do in my classroom that make children feel good and safe about themselves.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

Part II

Things I do in my classroom that are fearful and make children feel unsafe. For each statement circle 1, 2, 3 or 4 where 1 = strongly disagree (SD), 2 = disagree (D), 3 = agree (A), 4 = strongly agree (SA).

	SD	D	A	SA
a) I use sarcastic words on my pupils	1	2	3	4
Why?				

b) I beat or pinch children	1	2	3	4
Why?				

	SD	D	A	SA
c) I make pupils stand	1	2	3	4
Why?				

d) I exclude or send pupils out of my classroom	1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---	---

Why?

e) I allow my pupils to laugh at fellow pupils (peer ridicule) 1 2 3 4

Why?

f) I give manual punishments to my pupils 1 2 3 4

Why?

g) I allow the class monitor to beat other children 1 2 3 4

Why?

h) I tolerate children intimidating other children 1 2 3 4

Why?

i) I favor high performers 1 2 3 4

Why?

j) I allow children to make fun of other children 1 2 3 4

Why? _____

Vita

HASTEN MJONI MWALE'S CURRICULUM VITAE

A PERSONAL INFORMATION

NAME: Hasten Mjoni Mwale
DATE OF BIRTH: July 18, 1950
VILLAGE: Chikhosi
TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY : Chimutu
DISTRICT: Lilongwe

B PRESENT JOB DESCRIPTION

Lecturing
Planning
Assessment
Supervision
Administration

C PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1976 to 1978 -- primary school teaching.
1980 to date -- lecturing in primary teachers' training colleges.
1982 to 1988 -- head of Chichewa section, languages department.
1988 to 1992 -- Research Officer at Chichewa Board.
1993 to 1999 -- head of Social Studies department.
1998 to 2000 -- college coordinator for teaching practice.
1999 to 2000 -- college coordinator for orientation of untrained.
1999 to 2000 -- President, Ass'n of Social Studies Educators in Malawi (ASSEMA)
2005-2006 -- college assessment chairperson at St. Joseph's TTC.

D EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION

JCE	Malosa	1972
MSCE	Malosa	1974
Teaching Certificate	Blantyre Teachers' College	1976
Diploma in Education	Chancellor College	1981
Masters in Education	Bristol University	1997
Doctor of Philosophy	Virginia Tech	2006

E COURSES, WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES ATTENDED

Chief Examiners' course	MIE	1982
Language Development course	MIE	1986
Curriculum Development workshops	MIE	1986-92
Child Spacing Messages workshops	Ministry of Community Services	1990, 1992
MSTEP workshops	Ministry of Edu.	1991

Project Implementation Management course	MIM	1992
Gable SMC seminar	St. Joseph's TTC	1997
Population Education workshop	MIE	1997
Microsoft Word, Windows 95 course	Lilongwe TTC	1998
Gender Appropriate Curriculum workshop	MIE	1998
Social Studies workshop	MIE	1999
Social Studies International conference	Orlando, Florida	1999
Participatory Approach to teaching and learning	Ministry of Edu	2000
Social Studies International conference	Washington DC	2001
Social Studies International conference	Phoenix, Arizona	2002

F ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES HELD

Section head, Chichewa, languages department
Head of Social Studies department, P8
Teaching Practice Coordinator
Coordinator of orientation of untrained teachers
Research Officer
President of ASSEMA
Deputy Headmaster, Secondary School, P7
Deputy Principal, Teacher Training, P6

G FAMILY INFORMATION

Married to Georgina since 1977
Have eight children and two grandchildren